

喬林 知

Tomo Takabayashi Presents

これがマヌのマヌ
第一歩!



高林 知

Tomo Takabayashi Presents

これがマジック 第一歩!

Kyou Kara Maou - Volume 10

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Novel Illustrations

Prologue

Prologue



Everyday I've got enough to eat and a place where to sleep, it's simple but nice. And at the end of the month I even get some money.

Merit in the battlefield will always be properly paid. But it is not just for money, it is also the excitement that I feel when moving incognito into enemy territory. My heart trembles and so I feel alive. The greater the risk, the better.

My homeland is important to me.

For my homeland I know no way that's too long. I fight and face any oponent for it. About the reasons why I don't believe in giving up. This is not just a soldier. They pay us to fight and we have to obey our superior's orders.

"What exactly is patriotism, right?" I asked once to an officer whom I met after a long time.

"What if you are plotting a misión that is not paying off for you?"- he asked back.

"If that's the case I would try to reject it" I said. "But if the order comes from you, Excellency, I will certainly not hesitate in performing it."

Not to tell, that I already have used all the chances to disguise myself as a woman under my country's service. What should I do? It's fantastic how I've looked like a woman not just for once.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1



“You look really good.”

Having been complimented by her son’s schoolmate, Shibuya Miko blushes in spite of herself.

“How mean~ Ken-chan! Who’d have thought that you were a master at buttering people up too~”

“I’m not! Although the pattern is a bit outdated, but there’s a sense of Taisho period romanticism!”

These are his honest words. And besides, he’s not in the mood to get on his

friend's mother's good side.

Because on the way here, he's already lied to four teachers and a junior high friend, so by now he can't be bothered to make up another lie.

"Ah, but still, but still~ I'm not young anymore, but I still want to wear a furisode^[1]. That's just too shameless of me, after all I'm already over forty and married. I was just thinking, 'it's about time to take out the winter clothing', then I just happened to come across the kimono I used to wear when I was younger. And just when I was lamenting, 'so even I used to wear such cute colors when I was younger', suddenly a devil's voice whispered in my ear, 'Why don't you try it on and see...'"

Mama Shibuya, also known as the 'Pink Panther of Yokohama', says lightly.

Of course, now she loves wearing cute clothes even more than she did in her youth, but these things have to be put aside for now.

By the time Murata had run to Shibuya's house when his own school festival was reaching its climax, it was already past five in the afternoon.

He didn't take a cab, just ran like that straight from the bus stop.

Although it's already late autumn, the exertion heated him up enough to fog his glasses.

When he frantically pressed the doorbell like a child would, the one who responded was a dazed Miko in a kimono covered with huge lilies, saying, "Aiya, it's Ken-chan!"

"At first I planned to have a daughter, then give it to her when she's all grown up, that's why I kept it in the closet. I never thought that I'd have two rough boys instead, life really doesn't go your way all the time. Now all I can do is wait for them to get girlfriends, then give it to the girl once they've married her. Ah, but would it be too shameless for a bride to wear a furisode? Hmm—but if she's in her twenties, it should be roughly OK, right?"

"It's not roughly, it's very OK. And even if you don't leave it to Shibuya's girlfriend, Jennifer, you can wear it yourself, it's no big deal."

Murata wipes his foggy lenses with the sleeve of uniform, replying sincerely.

But in his slightly guarded heart, he can't help but resent his friend who hadn't been clear with things.

Shibuya, how much have you told your parents?

Judging from his mother's expression of happiness, Yuuri definitely hasn't come out about being engaged to a pretty boy.

Even if the other party is as cute as an angel, he still comes with a stick.

And he even has an adopted daughter waiting for him in the city. Although he's only sixteen, he's already a single father.

If he were to say such an impactful truth, how interesting... no, how shocked this family would be.

The man who shares Shibuya Yuuri's secret—Murata Ken thinks this in his heart.

This had better not come from my mouth, because I want to see how this family will react when they hear their own son say something so shocking.

"Come to think of it, Ken-chan, what's up with Yuu-chan? Didn't he come home with you today?"

"I'm here to talk about that, ma'am."

Hearing the tone from her favorite detective shows, Shibuya's mother grips her hands and frowns.

"W-what happened?"

"Things got heated between him and a girl from the same middle school, and now they're even in a karaoke competition!"

"A karaoke competition?!"

"That's right, singing Ozaki Yutaka's songs too."

"Such an old song! Ah. Sorry. Uh—uh—uh... Really? You're talking about the Yuu-chan who only knows the various baseball team anthems? The Yuu-chan who firmly believes that 'Take Me to the Ol' Ball Game' is a love song can sing mainstream songs now? People really can change with an effort."

"If he wants to, he can probably sing 'MY WAY', too."

“Of course, and even Kayama Yuzo’s version!”

Anyway, Murata tries to explain in brief words that Yuuri wants to report the results of the battle to him later, and thus may not even come home tonight, so he specifically asked him to come over and grab a change of clothes *et cetera* if possible.

Shibuya’s mother is rather surprised by the change in routine, but after hearing the whole story, she let Murata into the house eventually.

Murata climbs up the familiar stairs, and heads for the door at the end of the corridor.

It’s still someone else’s room that he knows fairly well, he can even tell roughly which things go where. Even if he has to find the necessary things, it won’t take him too long.

Just as he’s about to turn the yellow-copper doorknob—

“Wait a sec!”

Someone grabs his arm forcefully, and that’s not a friendly force.

Raising his head, he sees Shibuya’s brother. Murata smiles calmly,

“Hi, Big Brother...”

“We’re not close enough for you to call me big brother, friend of my brother.”

Looks like the eldest son of the family, Shibuya Shouri, is guarding the door for the second son.

Displeased eyes are looking down on him from behind the reflective lenses.

Although the two brothers look similar, the aura that radiates from them is completely different.

Murata replies with an unafraid smile,

“Then you’re too narrow-minded, brother of my friend. And you’re a college student, too.”

“So a high school brat is allowed to barge into other people’s room on their own? If you have even a bit of common sense left, then you shouldn’t do something like trespassing, right?”

"What do you mean, trespassing? It won't sound good if anyone were to hear you."

"Don't worry, no one will. If there was anyone else around, I'd face you with a smile. After all, I'm a very friendly person."

A well-rounded personality, excellent results, currently studying at Hitotsubashi University, the model student praised by neighbors, that's the impression Shibuya Shouri gives.

According to his brother's description, his brain might be good, but he's a weirdo who's obsessed with bishoujo games.

180 degrees different from the passionate baseball boy second son.

"Even if you want to search the room, you have to wait until Yuu-ch... until my brother's around. About that, where is Yuu-chan? Don't tell me you threw him in a strange place and then ran back by yourself."

And he's obsessed with his younger brother, too.

"Shibuya is heating things up with a middle high friend he hasn't seen in a while, and the two are competing in karaoke..."

Of course, this is crap too.

In reality he was in the middle of rescuing a WATER OLD BOY who was drowning in a cold swimming pool when he got swept away by an unknown current and vanished, probably to the other world.

Although Murata feels it's still too early to go back, but if it's Yuuri's personal desire, then there's nothing he can do about it.

Only this time, the path is filled with unease.

"...He's not back yet."

"What? Who are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about Shibuya!"

"Ah? But you just said something about him and a middle high friend? What do you mean, he's not back yet?!"

No matter how many months he stays in that other world, normally he'd be

back in a moment.

He normally only disappears for a few minutes, and before everyone else notices anything amiss, he'd reappear somewhere near the place he disappeared.

Although sometimes he'd be wearing G-strings.

"I waited five minutes, ten, and I still didn't feel him come back."

"Karaoke takes at least thirty minutes."

"I'm not talking about karaoke!"

Seeing the brother of his friend completely at ease, Murata feels like punching the wall.

How much has Shibuya told his family?

For example, has he told his brother that he's a mazoku?

But thinking about myself, I haven't told anyone about the fact that my soul is the Daikenja.

But the head of this household is indeed a member of earth's mazoku, so something like this must be casually mentioned over dinner...

"...I guess he probably wouldn't say that he's the maou, though."

"Maou?"

Shibuya Shouri looks as though he's seeing something intriguing, and then he once again crosses his arms in front of his chest.

"Didn't think that there was someone else who worships the Maou other than Bob."

"It's not worship, I'm not talking about any religion... What did you say?!"

Murata abruptly raises his head, grabbing the other person's shirt and shaking him hard, "What did you say? You just said... You said 'Bob', didn't you?!"

"Hey!"



There are a lot of Bobs in this world. When you say Bob, you could be talking about Bob Dylan, or David Bowie. There's also the possibility that you mean Bobo Brazil. Right now, he can almost hear Yuuri saying, 'Murata, how old are you?'

But if it was mentioned by the eldest son of this special family, it wouldn't be surprising if he meant that Bob.

"You know Bob?! Then please help me contact him immediately, do you know where he is? This is urgent, I really need his help!"

"Wait a sec, your g-g-g-g-glasses are gonna fall! What's the matter with you? Coming here and yelling Bob, Bob. Want me to contact him? I'm not a damn secretary. Speaking of which, did something happen to Yuu-chan? How is he?! Before I get this clear, how can I help you?"

Murata takes a deep breath and swallows,

"Do you really want to hear? I think it's better if you don't know."

"Is there anyone in the world who wouldn't want to know about their brother?"

"Looks like you really do have a brother complex!"

Murata wants to laugh out loud, but instead he starts calculating at a ferocious speed. He has to determine where to start from as quickly as possible.

"If I tell you, will you help me contact Bob?"

"I'll consider."

Turning back the reel of memories, the last time he met Bob was in the last last life.

About the Second World War, when he was in his prime.

Come to think of it, ever since he was born as Murata Ken, he hasn't met Bob.

This was all Bob's fault, for being too preoccupied with the continuation of the earth mazoku line, and never contacting him at all.

References

1. [↑ Kimono for unmarried women](#)

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

The clothes that suit a baseball boy best, should be mud-stained uniforms and sports clothes.

When I'm in a no-nationality chef's outfit, complete with a long apron in the front and a floral bandana around my head, even if I'm complimented by others, I can't bring myself to be happy about it.

"I thought Yuuri looks really good like that, so I asked the chef to bring his uniform."

Even if the compliment comes from an unparalleled pretty boy, as fantastical as flowers.

"And you do need a change of clothes, right?"

"...Thanks."

I accept the neatly-folded stack of clothes from Saralegui, who is cocking his head to a side and giving me a blossoming smile. Yup, it is a set of starched chef's uniform.

"Waa— It's brand new, too—"

No, no, my tone, it sounds as flat as a textbook recital, I have to accept his nice intentions happily.

"But clothes should rightly be a bit dirtier! Sara, eventually they'll get dirty anyway. Dressing up so white and handsomely, will actually be rather cumbersome. Ah, or maybe I should just be a bona fide kitchen apprentice, and go peel some potatoes in the dining room."

"What are you talking about, Yuuri!"

Saralegui grabs my right hand tightly with his fair and slender fingers.

His reaction and the skin contact are surprisingly agitated, seems like his fantastical appearance hides a rather passionate side of him.

"You are my very important guest, how can I let you work together with the employees outside? Besides, the sunlight and the sea breeze are very strong on the ocean, if you catch a cold, how can I face the people of Shin Makoku?"

"Even so, my pockets are completely empty, so I can't even give you a transportation fee or hand gift. If I ride your ship for nothing like this, I'll feel uneasy."

"No one here will think you're riding for free! You and your friend saved my life, you could say Shou Shimaron is in your debt."

The friend he's talking about is Wolfram.

Because the borrowed cloak caused Wolfram to be mistaken for Saralegui, and then he was shot in the chest by the rebelling Maxine's subordinate.

It's all thanks to the protection of the Poison Lady that he's fine now, but back then my mind had really gone blank with the shock.



And so, after travelling urgently on business from Japan to this world, I'm now, for some specific reasons, on the boat of a long-time enemy country, Shou Shimaron, and together with the seventeen-year-old tailor-made-for-the-throne Shou Shimaron king, Saralegui, no less.

And our destination is way at the ends of the seas, somewhere not even stated on a map, the country locked away for 2000 years, Seisakoku.

This trip is aiming for the shinzoku's mysterious homeland, in the hopes of discussing the possibility of restoring diplomatic relations between us.

Although it's an ambassadorial envoy led by the king, the ship we're riding seems a bit simple.

Still, three days in the storm hasn't affected it at all, proving that it is indeed stronger than it looks.

Though due to the vessel's slight... no, considerable age, the paint on the outside is peeling in many places.

Not only isn't there a beautiful goddess statue on its helm, even the railings don't have any animal carvings.

Unsurprising, because this was never a king's flagship. Instead, it's a cargo ship meant to bring offerings to Seisakoku.

Although this situation was caused by accidents beyond anyone's predictions, but they can't let a king sail on a lone ship no matter what, so they had summoned some of the medium-sized ships in the Shou Shimaron outer waters to take up guard duty mid-way. That's why we don't need any self-defense equipment, and there are enough rooms for the crew of both the flagship and the cargo ship to live in.

Thrown into a panic by the presence of the king, the captain had even prepared spacious and beautiful cabins for the king and his guests.

Despite all the preparations, Saralegui still sighed in surprise—looks like he can only rest in a luxurious bedroom.

Though that room is a lot bigger than the living room back home.

Even though these are pretty good circumstances for a cargo ship, but it's still torturous to stay with someone you've just met, twenty-four seven.

And Saralegui is the young king of a large country, unlike me, he's a royal heir from a famous family.

If you want me to stay in the same room as him all day, just that awkward atmosphere will be enough to suffocate me.

Maybe if he studied at a public high school too, we'd still have something to talk about.

Unfortunately, I was born in a commoner's family, and studied at fairly standard public middle, middle high, and high schools.

I didn't have any friends who are nobility, and neither do I like riding horses.

For my graduation trip I always went to Kyoto, and would get a lashing from the teacher for pillow fighting.

As for Saralegui, he even wears silk nightclothes to sleep.

Pretty boys' pajamas must be made of silk, that seems to be a rule in this world.

For someone like me, who can't be bothered and just falls asleep in a shirt and shorts, the see-through negligee is an eyesore.[\[1\]](#).

In the middle of the night when I went to the bathroom, I even thought I'd accidentally walked into a girl's room, and got such a shock.

At first all our belongings were kept it a luxury ferry, pretty as picture and docked in the Saralegui War Port. Who would have thought that just as we were setting sail, there was a political upheaval, and we barely escaped with our lives into this accompanying cargo ship.

Although all that happened more than ten days ago, but just thinking about the situation back then still makes my heart ache, and a certain spot deep in my mind heat up.

The hands that were gripping mine so tightly. Loosening with the indescribable sound of a stick plunging into the sand, and the body next to me falling slowly.

Wolfram with an arrow sticking out of his chest, fell backwards onto the deck, engulfed in flames.

When I grabbed the middle part, it felt exceptionally cold.

“...ri, Yuuri!”

“Ah?”

Saralegui's fair and slender fingers are shaking my shoulders, and he's staring at me with an expression of concern.

Since there's a pale colored lens between us, I can't see the color of his eyes.

Those sunglasses are meant to protect his eyes from the light and the heat, so unless he's sleeping, he always wears them.

“What's the matter? Are you not feeling well? Didn't you say you don't get seasick?”

“Relax, relax, I'm fine. I was just feeling a little breathless, that's all.”

“Breathless? Uh-oh, I'll go open the windows.”

“Ah~ It's okay, it's okay! I'll just go out for a breather. Seems like if I'm cooped up indoors, I can't calm down at all!”

And so I abandon my unhappy roommate and leave the room, closing the door behind me, then going with nature and heaving a long, long sigh.

Only now do my tense shoulders relax.

For some reason, I get really nervous whenever I'm alone with Saralegui.

On the wide open deck, I enjoy the sea breeze and prepare to break my own squats record.

"Something happened?"

"Waa!"

The very neutral and husky voice comes from right beside me, forcing me to make a very embarrassing scream.

"D-d-don't suddenly speak up like that! Y-you scared the hell out of me."

"A lady never makes a noise when walking, and Gurrier is very graceful, y'know."

Shin Makoku's spy self-indulgently flexes his muscles.

Sometimes a well-honed spy infiltrating another country, sometimes the most reliable bodyguard in history's lowest staffed ambassadorial envoy, sometimes the flower of the party dressed in magnificent evening clothes... He is Gurrier Josak.

The scary thing is, he still gets tons of invitations, and has almost never known what it's like to be a wallflower.

Seems that different people have different interests, after all.

"Why d'you suddenly pop up from the corner of the corridor?!"

"Because this ship doesn't have an extra layer under the floorboards, or an extra layer on the ceiling, but we spies are the best at hiding in dark and damp spots..."

"And Josak... Why are you wearing the long-sleeved apron of a cafeteria auntie..."

His most incredible skill is his seamless disguises, there's not any bit of awkwardness in it.

"Isn't it obvious? Of course it's to match the Young Master, and I won't ever let you leave any food uneaten—"

I feel as though he's stuck a sour plum on my forehead.

Although he looks a bit disorienting, I know that once he has a weapon in his hands, he's the most capable soldier.

Only now he has a pan and a ladle in those hands.

"But what's up with you? Sighing so long just now, that's not like you at all."

"You say it like I'm always carefree. Right, right, so I'm someone with no brains and all brawn!"

"I would never say something so rude-- Ah, but Gurrier likes bodybuilding. After all that's a pretty good hobby, too."

"Don't tell me, you flex your pecs even when you're bored with nothing else to do..."

And flexing both sides in rhythm.

The two of us, in brand new kitchen uniform and a long sleeved apron respectively, come to the chilly, windy deck.

The sun is high in the sky, so it should be past noon now. But it seems that the temperature in these parts of the seas is real low all year round, the ocean surface is greyish-blue, and the waves are fairly high too.

"Because there's a cold current. This is far north, quite a distance away from Shin Makoku, aren't you cold?"

"Cold? Ah~ Right." Now that he mentions it, I realize that the muscles in my body are all taut, it's because of the cold air here, making my body naturally contract. If I did rigorous exercises the way I am now, my skin and flesh will probably split right open.

"Right—Then I'll just do some warm-ups, first some simple stretches and slow jogging."

Josak's brows immediately sag downwards. This is not surprising either, because whenever I'm free, I'll drag him jogging with me.

"More jogging? Really, since I escaped from the army academy life where I was tortured by the seniors, I haven't run like this."

"Actually, you don't have to force yourself to accompany me!"

"Nonono, please let me accompany milord. In fact, I even wish we could sleep in the same room."

"...When it comes to the rooms, I'd advise you not to accompany me."

Josak asks me, who's staring into the sky wordlessly, "Why?" Although it's not something I should announce to the whole world, but I say it anyway.

"Becauses Sara is a lingerie-wearing sexy king!"

Only thing is, if something small like this makes him lose his confidence, I'll feel troubled; if it fires him up and causes him to wear a sexy long-sleeved apron, I'll be even more troubled.

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After some simple stretches, I start jogging around the deck.

Just when I touch the mast at the ship's stern for the second time, my foot gets caught on the ropes, and I lose my balance.

"Careful!"

Josak grabs my waist just in time.

I'm saved, thank goodness I didn't have to crash into that stack of cargo left out here to brave the weather.

Just as I shake my head and prepare to lift myself up, although I wasn't paying any particular attention to it, my gaze just happens to wander to the shadows of the wooden crates.

"Eh?"

A young woman is squatting by the boxes.

Both her hands are pressed against the peeling paint on the wood, her thin body gently holding her breath.

When our eyes meet, she resists the urge to scream, moving away from me

using her knees, her lashes and lips trembling.

“Who...”

Before I can ask her ‘who are you’, she’s already stood up.

Her eyes are wide with terror, eyes that are clearly golden even under the sun.

She turns back as she tries to escape the scene, and that long hair floats by before me.

Even her hair is golden, although filth has turned it pale grey.

“Wait, please wait a moment! I won’t do anything to you!”

“Aiya, Young Master, there’s no need to look so desperate^[2]... Ah~ It looks like there’s no need to put up a chase anymore, perfect.”

Just as Josak said, the woman is turning back.

Since she had changed directions as soon as she started running earlier, now her stick-like legs are both shaking like leaves.

Now I accidentally notice that she’s barefoot, and not wearing any decent clothes either in this cold air. All she has is a piece of cloth, worn in the fashion of the Yayoi period, tied at the waist with a piece of rope.

Her arms and neck are really thin too, even her indistinguishable scream sounds weak.

She curls up in the dark beside the cargo, holding her head in her hands. Her back continue to shake nonstop, what on earth is she so scared about?

“Um...”

Before I can even touch her with my outstretched hand, she’s already so terrified her shoulders are shuddering.

Just then, some angry male voices come from the stair leading to the storage hold.

Their conversing voices come closer and closer, making it obvious they’re looking for someone. The woman desperately curls up her body, covering her ears, too scared to move. There’s no mistaking it, she’s the target the men are after.

"There's no point in hiding, they'll flush her out eventually... If she hides in the boxes, she might still have a shot of making it past them. Damn, why are all of them covered?!"

I frantically fumble with the cargo, looking for something that opens, but every surface is firmly nailed shut.

The spy beside me can't bear to watch anymore, so he puts his hands to the edges of the boxes, and starts pulling at them forcefully.

The entire side of the box rips away in his hands, those biceps really can do anything.

"It's all thanks to you, Josak, I'm sure your mother was a beauty who looked great in an evening dress."

"You meant, my dad."

We hurriedly stuff the thin body into the box, then casually put the boards back in place.

In case the boards fall down again, we use our backs to hold them there.

That's when the crew, yelling loudly, notice us and run over.

The sleeves on their clothes have been deliberately ripped off, as though they're showing off how thick their arms are.

"Deepest apologies, milords."

"W-what be the matter?"

Crap, I'm talking like historical drama again.

Whenever I purposely want to sound authoritative, I'll unconsciously use this manner of speaking.

After all, I haven't learned the proper manner of nobility a king or ruler should have.

"Have you seen a young woman?"

"No, no. W-we didn't see any stowaways!"

The two crewmen cock their heads out on confusion at my answer. Their light

brown ponytails even swing about gracefully.

I said something I shouldn't have, didn't I?

"There aren't any stowaways aboard this ship."

"Is that so? That's great. What a bother, stowing away has become an up and coming culture amongst the youths, like in Japan, we have a saying, 'whatever happens, we have to stow away first'."

There's no such saying!

"We're not looking for stowaways, but Seisakoku's..."

"Are you deaf? My young master already said he doesn't know anything."

Stunned by my ridiculous excuse, Josak presently starts cracking his fingers, looking as though he was getting ready to play it rough.

"Right, who wants to be the maidmer princess' lunch?"

The crewmen's expression changes abruptly. But hmm, I didn't know mermaid princesses were carnivorous?

"Y-y-y-y-you said, be their lunch?"

"Not that way, I saw her head for the control room."

Right then, a figure with a familiar gait, walks over to us from a cabin in front of the mast, near the bow.

He's wearing a uniform different from anyone else on this ship.

Different from the aqua blue-based Shou Shimaron army uniform, his outfit is yellow and white, reminiscent of desert sand.

He is the Dai Shimaron ambassador traveling with us, Lord Weller Conrad.

"You should be looking in the opposite direction."

After all, he is the royal ambassador from a neighboring country of higher position.

Perhaps they know that disobeying orders now will be a direct slap to the other party's face, because the crewmen reluctantly take their leave.

Standing before us, who had our backs against the wooden boxes, Lord Weller

says in a low voice, “I honestly can’t quite approve of your methods.”

At first I thought he was blaming me for hiding the stowaways, but that doesn’t seem to be the case.

After scrutinizing me from top to bottom, he hands over his brown coat, saying, “Dressing like this and coming out into the sea breeze. You’ll catch a cold.”

I softly turn my head to the other side.

“No need, I don’t want to borrow another country’s uniform.”

“These are my own casual clothes.”

“I appreciate the intention.”

Lord Weller turns his gaze to Josak. The spy raises both hands, saying in a light and mischievous tone, “Don’t look at me like that!”

And then he continues,

“I didn’t do anything, and I didn’t give him any funny ideas either.”

“It’s true, no one gave me any ideas. It’s because I don’t feel cold, so I don’t want to borrow anyone else’s clothes. Even if I need to, I will borrow Saralegui’s, that’s all.”

“...If so, you should go and get it from him quickly, or it’ll be too late when you start feeling uncomfortable.”

“I think you’re worrying about the wrong person.”

He doesn’t answer, narrowing his eyes, and the scar on his brow even twitches a little.

“Sara is in the bedroom, is it okay for you to be away from him?”

“This is his ship. As long as there’s no big crisis, Shou Shimaron’s Saralegui should logically be very safe. That’s right, as long as there’s no big crisis.”

Lord Weller pulls back his left hand, his expression still unreadable.

I look at the joint with its natural movements, but I can’t stop thinking, is that a real hand?

Is his left arm real?

Or is it a well-crafted prosthetic, which looks and works just like living flesh and bone?

But is there really a prosthetic that's as soft and warm as real human skin in this world?

And there'd probably be the von Karbelnikoff stamp near the arm, too.

My imagination is interrupted at the moment Lady Anissina smiles knowingly, because the wooden box behind me shakes slightly.

Crap, we forgot about the stowaway in the box. We can't have her running out of air to breathe, so we hurriedly take away the wooden boards.

The woman tumbles out of the box, taking a deep breath of fresh air and then sneezing loudly, and not just once or twice either.

She doesn't stop sneezing, and as the ones who helped hide her, we feel really guilty about it.

"Sorry, turns out there's pepper inside, huh."

She puts her hands on her unsteady knees, trying to stand.

That's when I carefully reevaluate this sneaky stowaway, and honestly calling her a woman doesn't seem too appropriate.

She's more or less my age, or maybe she's just one or two years older than me? Those golden eyes, filled with terror and staring at us, are fairly large, and those stick-like limbs poke out of clothes that look like they come from the Joumon or the Yayoi period.

But despite her skinniness, her chest is surprising large and eye-catching. So much so that I don't know where to look, finally resorting to staring at the sky.

"Your... chest... is... really... big... Waa! S-sorry!"

I actually said something that sounds like sexual harassment!

"Young Master, really, why should you get all flustered over those fakes? Those are obviously stuffed. Outsiders might be fooled, but you won't get past my eyes!"

“Because your chest is pure and genuine muscle... Waa!”

While I’m thrown into a panic by the bumps under the thin clothes, something hard and heavy suddenly lands on my foot!

It’s a can with red and white labels.

The girl hurriedly kneels to the ground and picks up the fallen can, cradling it. From the slit in her clothes, I can even see the bread stuffed down her chest.

“Ah, a manmade chest!”

“See!”

The spy who believes that men should have D cup laughs, telling me ‘I told you so!’ with a look. Seems like she couldn’t bear her hunger while stowing away, so she stole some food from the kitchen, and even now she’s desperately protecting the food so we can’t snatch it away.

“I won’t take it! I won’t take away those things, so please stop grabbing your chest! Ah, otherwise my nose will starts spraying Gun... Gun Juices!”

“Once you know they’re fakes, even the desire seems hollow,” taken from sexual harassment Senryuu[\[3\]](#).

Lord Weller quickly surveys the surroundings, and after making sure the crew didn’t see anything, he pushes the girl’s back, saying urgently, “She’s a shinzoku, I’m afraid we won’t be able to communicate with her.”

“It’s best if we get her back as soon as possible.”

“Back? Back where? Although there are plenty of places in my room where she can hide, unfortunately this time I’m bunking in with Sara. Ah! That’s right, give me that coat just now.”

There are already goosebumps on her exposed shoulders.

“It’s for her. If you’re willing, can you lend it to her.”

“Of course.”

For a moment there, I felt as though Conrad smiled, or it could be the strong winds forced him to arch his eyes.

He puts the coat over the girl without a hint of displeasure. At least he’s as

gentlemanly as he used to be.

"Anyway, first we have to find you a room to stay in. Josak, is there anywhere she can hide around your place?"

He replies with a shrug.

Looks like he's also stuck with the captain, who had arranged for Saralegui and me to be in the same room.

"How about Lord Weller's place? Although it's near the crew's cabins, he has a single room. Because he's Dai Shimaron's ambassador."

"If it's just her, of course there wouldn't be a problem lending it to her as a hideout."

"Eh, what? She didn't stow away alone... Ah!"

Carefully appraising her surroundings, the girl breaks free from us and starts running forth.

As she's running, she even purposely bends her body forward, to prevent the food she's carrying in her chest from falling, as fast as a rabbit.

"Wait a sec!"

I hurriedly give chase, but she climbs down the ladder in the stern, passing through the storage hold we've never been in, finally pulling up the last floorboard. There's instantly a smell of saltwater even stronger than the sea breeze.

"Wait up, you!"

"Your Majesty, don't run too far in!"

Before my belt is grabbed, I'm already climbing down a ladder that will break at any moment.

Although my palm is being pricked by the wood, but it's taking all I got just to prevent myself from falling, so I don't have the effort to worry about splinters.

"What happened to that girl? Don't tell me she lost her footing and fell onto the shelves?" I look down warily, but I never thought— "Eh..."

Suddenly, countless lights shine up simultaneously from the bottom of the

ship.

It's not the light from fireflies or marine animals, those are eyes, the eyes of sentient beings.

This reminds me of the time I was surrounded by rats in the sewers, forcing a cold sweat on my back. My fingers start trembling, and I nearly fall.

"Your Majesty!"

"Young Master, are you all... Aiyaya, looks like we've discovered some rather troubling cargo."

Josak and Lord Weller actually look panicked, reaching out frantically and grabbing my clothes tightly.

"Why are there so many people at the bottom of the boat... Is this entire group stowaways?!"

"They're not in here of their own free will."

Lord Weller seems to know some inside information.

As I'm pulled up, I feel that painful, needle-sharp gaze.

Only I don't know if it represents disgust or curiosity.

"They're all shinzoku. Shinzoku who had wandered to Shimaron from Seisakoku, and are now being deported back to their home country.

Their eyes are all golden.

The weak rays of light shining in from the cracks, make their silent eyes glimmer.

References

- ↑ The word for eyesore can also mean something that's tempting. So he's either saying he likes looking at it or hates it. The sentence could mean either one. Takabayashi-sensei knows how to play with us.

2. ↑ Something wrong with my raws here, I'm winging it ^^'
3. ↑ Apparently it's some motivational poem in Japan?

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

There are loud and hurried footsteps coming down the wet stone stairs.

How many days has it been since there was last a soldier passing by? Usually there isn't much light shining into this underground prison, the only thing on the mossy stone floor is a cracked bowl.

Although there's still half a bowl of water in there, time has long since turned it sour.

At the bottom of the stone steps, the castle's lowest steel gates are creaking open, and the footsteps of two people approach closer.

One is the familiar clack of army boots, but the other one doesn't walk like a prison guard, looks like both visitors' shoes and physiques are fundamentally different.

Maybe it's an executioner here to deal punishment, or maybe it's another comrade who got caught.

The man thinks dazedly, but he remains motionless, lying on the damp stone floor with his back against the cell door.

After so many interrogations and much physical violence, his body has long since fallen to the pressure. Even if there weren't cuffs on his limbs, he doesn't know where to run to.

The rusty bow-shaped lock makes a screeching sound of metal, and the floor, its color changed by the perpetual moisture, is lit up.

"That's right, it's this guy."

Just as he's wondering at the familiarity of the voice, he's kicked viciously in the back.

As he's splayed over the floor, groaning, this time he's kicked in the side, forcing his body to face forward.

“What a bother.”

A man raises the bright torch in his left hand, mumbling cynically.

“So you haven’t died, after all.”

“...Ah...”

The prisoner swallows the words on the tip of his tongue, not that he could have voiced those words anyway.

In his blurred vision, he can see the other party’s golden hair sparkling in the orange flames.

“Hey, you sure are sleeping like it’s nothing. To get to this lowest-level underground prison, do you know how many crimes I had to commit?”

The tall man with the prison guard—Adalbert von Grantz continuously makes a piercing, gleeful laugh.

“Not only did I eat and drink without paying, vandalized city property, I even sold roast biscuits with drinks without a license!”

How could such a petty criminal be locked together with the mastermind who disrupted the national order?

“But you sure look bad, looks like prisoners are the same in every country.”

“This man is the sinner who attempted to take King Saralegui’s life, he’s different from the other convicts.”

The prison guard replies self-righteously, in a tone of unwavering determination in this truth.

“But no matter how we interrogate him, he simply refuses to reveal his companion’s names.”

“Maybe your interrogation methods are too gentlemanly? How interesting, this guy was a high-level general in the military not too long ago. Who knew he would have fallen so far, so quickly.”

Adalbert bends his knees and squats down, grabbing the silent man’s chin. Although he’s covered in bristles now, not long ago he was very clean-shaven.

Normally, this condition could never be found on a Shou Shimaron soldier.

"It's this guy all right, I'm taking him."

"No way, this wasn't what we..."

Adalbert waves his large hand, throwing the prison guard who was grabbing him at the bars, and then he kicks the prisoner in the stomach, speaking to him in a familiar tone and lifting up his entire curled body.

"Oh, yeah, there's something you might like to hear. Wanna hear it?"

"...Whate..."

At first he wanted to say 'whatever', but the other party doesn't give him a chance to reply. This part hasn't changed either.

"That king who got ahead of you, the boat he's on..."

These unexpected words make his back twitch subconsciously, which then makes him moan in pain.

"The way I see it, it won't work, something will probably happen."

"Why?!"

"Aiya, shouldn't you be very happy?"

His tone is even sterner than imagined.

Come to think of it, something like this happened before, a long time ago.

But before he can remember what it was like, Nigel Weiss Maxine loses his consciousness.

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Which idiot would believe such a far-fetched thing?

Shibuya Shouri put his cellphone on his shoulder, purposely raising his voice as he spoke.

The shocking truth his brother's friend told him is still echoing in his mind, but his ears are listening to a regular time enquiry service.

"Hey, Sapp^[1]? It's me, it's me!"

As expected. Murata Ken leans in closer, but he doesn't seem to be in the mood for his bad jokes.

"I'm not looking for that Bob. Besides, which scamming syndicate would call robot cops?"

"...Not robot cops, it's ROBOCOP!"

"I don't care if it's crop, copper, Crocop or Coppola^[2], just help me get Bob! I'm sure you're really worried for your brother's safety, right? Brother of my friend. I'm begging you, do me a favor since we're both glasses guys."

"Not cute at all, now if it was some glasses girls club, that might still be cuter."

Finally fed up being bothered by the brat, he scrolls down the 'B' list in his contacts. Bonda Tetsuro (friend), Boston Shop (hotel), Bowling King (bowling arena), Boris Akademi (exchange student).

"Bob, Bob... got it. Muraken, listen closely, if it doesn't get through then you gotta give up. If he's not in the country, I can't reach him. Because my phone can't connect with the system over in Europe."

"As long as you're willing to give him a call. I won't complain about your crappy phone, just make the call already."

"Really, brats should be sincere when asking for favors..."

Shouri's grousing is abruptly cut short once he hears the dial tone.

For some reason, behind the ridiculous amount of background noise, there's a hearty American greeting.

How unlucky, they actually got the guy the brat wanted.

"Hi, Shibuya! It's been a while, why are you calling me now?"

"Bob?! Where on earth are you!"

But the other end of the phone is nothing but 'shuu—' or 'babeebabee—' noises. Maybe it's because the phone is an old model, all they can hear is the background sounds, including even a rhythmic drum beat.

"This voice is JUNIOR, you're JUNIOR, right? Wo—Yee—Heh--! I'm dancing the samba now! Sing, samba! Dance, samba!"

He's in Brazil? Shouri grips the phone firmly again.

"Don't call me JUNIOR, I'm not your son. Back to the point, are you in Rio? Rio

de Janeiro?"

"No, Shouri, I'm in... a shopping street. Since yesterday I've been at a business meeting... in this shopping street where a carnival is taking place. Hayahou—! Follow the samba rhythm everyone, easy delivery [3]!"

"Are you telling me a bad joke?! And in Japanese, too. What type of activities are you handling now?"

The eldest son of the Shibuya house 'tsks' at the phone receiver.

Having such a crazy sunglasses dude as a leader, is the world economy okay?

And this uncle is also the Maou of the entire world, looks like the future of the earth isn't so bright.

"Bob, Bob took the call? Is it the real Bob?"

Beside him, Murata's lenses are shining, and he's as excited as though it's his first time discovering matsutake mushrooms.

"Oh, yeah. A brat called Murata came to my place, and he wanted to find you urgently."

"Murata? Who's that..."

Murata quickly grabs Shouri's phone before the American enjoying a samba New Year's festival starts reminiscing about the past, yelling into the phone and waving at the man who's obviously not there to see him.

"Bob? I'm Henry. Well, honestly that's not my identity now, but you should be more familiar with this name, right?"

Another unfamiliar name. Shouri can't help but frown.

"That's right, I'm Henry Regent. But now I'm called Murata Ken. It's nice to meet you as Muraken."

Is this really their first meeting? The introduction right now is spoken in French, but everything before that was fluent English.

He had heard that Yuu-chan's friend here has a high test score, but he didn't think that his English was so good, too.

"Sorry for the sudden call, Bob, but I urgently need someone who can help me

get to that world. If there isn't anyone, then a thing or a place will do. The place where Lord Weller came to earth, wasn't there a power user who helped summon him of their own accord?"

Now they're talking about a man who came to earth from another world.

That world and earth? What world is 'that world'?

Mars, or Venus?

Don't tell me it's warping to an alternate world?

Don't tell me that before the universal clock starts its countdown, the era of Star Trek is already here? Hearing the reason for his brother's disappearance, Shouri can't help but think that way, and do he asks,

"What? What do you mean? You're saying that Yuu-chan didn't travel in a spaceship or a machine, but physically went straight through a black hole?"

"That's absolutely right. And not a black hole, the first time he was flushed down a toilet."

"Stop joking around, if you wanna sleep talk, then wait till you're asleep!"

"This is not sleep talk, brother of my friend."

The brother who has lived with him for sixteen years, is actually the king of a powerful country in an alternate world, and not something romantic like the heir to a long-lost royal line, but the demon king of a tribe with great powers—something like that is really hard to believe.

And surprisingly, the reason he's forced to believe this sort of fantasy story, aside from the fact that he knew his father is a mazoku since he was young, is the forced heir to the position of the Maou of earth.

And that person forced to be heir—is himself.

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Shouri pinches the Post-it notes on his computer desk lightly.

If it was his smoker of a great-grandfather, by now he would have long since smoked a cigarette to calm himself down.

But he can't smoke, because there's an athlete in the house.

If the second-hand smoke affected his brother's growth, he would blame himself till the day he dies.

"That's why, Bob, normally he should be back within two or three minutes. If you count according to that place's beep—time, it should been a few days already. Normally he'd be wearing that beep—G-strings, floating in the same place as that beep— stupid Star Tour. But this time it's already been ten or twenty minutes..."

Gripping someone else's phone tightly, Murata swears uncharacteristically.

The high school student is actually proficient enough to converse with an American in fluent English, but when he listens carefully he notices there are plenty of curses mixed in, four letter words and excrements flying everywhere.

Where did a Japanese high school student learn this kind of language? The strings of 'beep—'s really grate on someone's ears.

"Hey, use some politer English! Don't just spout poop or F-words."

His brother's friend reacts to an elder's warning with just a glance.

"Nothing, it's just that JUNIOR is a bit impatient, being sidelined. The main problem now is how do I go over to that side? Last time Shibuya... I'm talking about Yuuri, the younger one. As long as there's a technique to find his presence, moving across is surprisingly easy. It's actually a piece of cake, after all he's so unique, and his maryoku so powerful. Truth is, Yuuri can already travel across these two places with his own power, he just hasn't realized it yet. As long as the circumstances allow it, he can cross over with his own power, though of course it needs sufficient stamina and outstanding resolve. But the situation this time is a little serious. Because I can't feel his consciousness and soul whatever I do. This is the first time I'm not able to sense a soul like Shibuya's anywhere in my sensory field, I could vaguely feel him even when he was in human territory last time. What kind of strong barrier did he meet this time? Or has he really been called to a place where the power of the mazoku can't reach?"

"Hey!"

Murata ignores Shouri's yell completely, just shaking his head at the phone in denial.

In this moment it's very clear that he is after all a Japanese.

"Mazoku items from that side? Hmm... One thing does come to mind, I think it's a metal carving of a condor or an eagle! It's something Yuuri was wearing from the start."

"Hey, you can't do that—"

Turns out the special calendar used to note down when the new games can be pre-ordered has been used by Murata to jot down notes.

Whatever, small matter.

"...Mn, Mexico... should be around there. Got hold of the place Rodriguez is working?"

Finally losing his patience, Shouri snatches his phone from the guest's hands, and uses the English he learned from a textbook to deal with the college entrance exams to say non-stop,

"Bob Robert! Tell me where to go, too, PLEASE! HE IS my BROTHER, you know! No matter what, as an older brother, it'd be weird if I don't go along. Yuuri is my younger brother, there's no way I can hand my precious baby brother to a friend he just met a few months ago, is there?!"

But the answer he got is monotonous.

"I'm really sorry, Shouri, but you can't go there."

His response of "why?" comes out trembling. The hand holding the dark blue plastic cover on the phone is already sweating.

"You are purely and wholly a living being that belongs only to this world. Be it your blood, flesh, or your endlessly reincarnating soul, they're all created from the earth's elements. As long as you are a descendant from the prokaryotes of the distant past, you're considered as having a very pure bloodline. And so those who lack any elements from that world, can't get across without a certain amount of power. And you'll need a lot of that power."

"You say a certain amount of power... Then exactly how much force do you need to go to the alternate world? Is falling from a very high place enough? Like the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building or the Yokohama LANDMARK

TOWER? Or is it a bomb, or nuclear bomb? If I use the explosive force of a nuclear core, will it blow me to the ridiculous world Yuuri is in?"

The other side sinks into a long silence. The background noise has long been left behind, all that's left is the piercing sound of a connection almost lost.

"Robert!"

"...Very sorry."

Shouri slams the phone onto the ground without ending the call.

References

1. ↑ Bob Sapp, American wrestler famous in Japan
2. ↑ The actual joke here is 'carrot, radish, Crocop or Coppola', so I changed it.
Crocop = Mirko Crocop, Japanese K-1 fighter. Coppola = Francis Ford Coppola, director of 'The Godfather'.
3. ↑ Bob says anzan(安産) which literally means "easy delivery/childbirth"
(because they're moving their hips to a rhythm that would make it easier for them to give birth XD) ; but also, since he's a businessman those two kanjis can mean "cheap" (安) ; "products" (産), though not if you put them together like that!

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

The large door is roughly pushed open without even a knock, shocking the owner of the ship into looking up.

The pale golden hair that looks almost translucent is still sticking to his fair face.

“Yuuri?”

“Saralegui, do you know what you’ve done?!”

He just cocks his head slightly, looking at me through the thin lens.

Slender fingers are spread across his knees, and there’s an undecorated bottle next to his chair.

“I’m putting on nail varnish. If you don’t mind using my things, please take some. It’s normal to get small wounds on trips, since this is different from the easy castle life, after all, so we have to be careful about cracked nails.”

“Cracked nails? I’m not a pitcher... That’s not what I’m talking about, Sara!”

“What are you so angry about, Yuuri? Have I done something to make you angry?”

“Those shinzokus...”

The person behind me, either Josak or Lord Weller, closes the door in time.

“How could you treat the shinzoku like that!”

I can’t stop thinking about what I just saw.

When we descended from the storage hold, those golden eyes had looked up in unison.

Under the illumination of the faint light, we made a rough headcount, there should be around a hundred adults there.

As for the girl we met on the deck, she was in a corner cutting the stolen food

into tiny portions to share around. Although the people kept holding out their hands, indicating, ‘I want some too, I want some too’, the food she had hidden in her chest was clearly not enough.

But this didn’t cause a riot amongst them, and those who didn’t get any just looked disappointed and gave up.

As though they were long since used to a shortage of food.

Luckily, there weren’t any young children amongst them, but we can’t deport them back to their country just because they’re adults.

To make matters worse, they’re squeezed in a cold and damp cellar, there’s no need for them to make the trip home under such horrible conditions.

Forcefully sending people who had become refugees due to certain reasons home without any escort, really is a very cruel thing to do.

“What on earth were you thinking? Saralegui! Why didn’t you hide the shinzoku who had gone through so much to escape to Shou Shimaron, and why are you deporting back to Seisakoku instead?!”

Shou Shimaron’s boy king, Saralegui, replies with a look of confusion,

“Because they’re citizens of Seisakoku, isn’t sending them back to the country they grew up in the happiest thing for them?”

“But didn’t these people just escape from their country? And there were so many of them squeezed on such a tiny boat. Although they were reaching out for help, they aren’t just your average shipwrecked crew. They should be refugees, right? I saw something like this before, at the dock!”

But I don’t mention anything about incidentally saving two shinzoku children.

And the fact that I’m carrying the latter those fraternal twins – Zeda and Zisha - gave me, is a matter of utmost secrecy.

“Refugees... Is that so? Maybe.”

I’m ticked off by his nonchalant reaction, punching the wall in my rage.

“If so! If that is so, isn’t it worse to deport them back? They were oppressed, and felt their lives were in danger, that’s why they dared to make a break for it! If

you refuse to lend them a hand and send them back to Seisakoku instead, who knows what'll happen to them!"

"Is that so?"

Saralegui puts his pointer finger on the bridge of his glasses, then pushes it upwards, his movements light as a feather.

The light red lips curve into an innocent smile.

"They were oppressed? How come I never heard of that, who did you hear it from, Yuuri?"

"I..."

Faced with his question, I'm at a loss for words.

Actually I didn't hear it from anybody, it's just I concluded it those people begging for help at the dock, and the two children we protected earlier.

I didn't hear any special inside information, because we can't understand each other, so even if I wanted to ask for the details, it is nearly impossible.

"So I didn't hear it from anyone, actually I'm not too sure, either."

To be precise, even if I wanted to make sure, I can't.

"But isn't it obvious just looking at them?"

By now I'm just being unreasonable, and suddenly I lose confidence in my own words.

I guessed that they must have been refugees, who ran for their lives away from their home country, hoping to find help in Shou Shimaron, and I worked under that belief since.

Even though I don't understand their situation at all, and never confirmed the truth with the people involved, I made that decision on my own.

But Saralegui was different.

He's been accepting the holistic education a ruler should have for seventeen years, and he understands the way of this world better than I do, too, so surely he should know more about the Seisakoku's situation than I do.

And a rookie Maou like me is lecturing him.

“Yuuri’s so amazing.”

But the boy who’s already leading Shou Shimaron at seventeen years of age, blinks his long lashes a few times before he starts sighing.

He put his right palm on his chest, then he stacks his left hand over it lightly.

“You’re so impressive! Seeing into the depth of the matter from such a small detail. Yuuri, you seem like you really were born to be king.”

I never thought that person I was scolding would turn around and praise me, so now all I want to do is to dig a hole and hide in it.

“...Someone like that doesn’t exist.”

He narrows those eyes, whose color I still can’t identify, and shakes his head gracefully,

“I believe they do.”

It’s true, on the letter Zeda and Zisha gave me, there was nothing about seeking help.

All it said was that they wished to save someone or somewhere called Venera, and even the knowledgeable Lord von Christ Günter can’t decipher which it is.

Then I simply let my imagination run wild, concluding on my own accord that the shinzokus are refugees.

So I have no right to be praised.

Blissfully unaware of all that, Saralegui takes my hand and says excitedly,

“When we discovered them on the lifeboat, my men kept trying to ask them for the reason, but they just refused to say anything. That’s why I... decided that they must have met with an accident in the sea near the mainland, and were asking us for help, so I wanted to send them back home as soon as possible. Looks like I shouldn’t have done things based on intuition alone. Yuuri, please tell me, what should I do with them? What’s the appropriate way to solve this problem for them?”

“About that...”

A bitterness is welling up deep in my throat. It feels like someone is spying on the depths of my heart, making breathing more and more difficult. And throughout this all, he has never once let go of the hands wrapped around mine.

“...Let’s think about it together.”

I can only answer as such.

“How will your country respond to something like this?”

Saralegui suddenly leans his face in closer. Although the color of his eyes is undecipherable behind those lenses, they’re shining brightly.

“Respond?”

“Yeah, refugees, there should be plenty of refugees escaping into Shin Makoku from the neighboring countries, Yuuri! What is your country’s policy towards them? If it’s okay with you, can you tell me?”

“Our policy...”

The atmosphere right now doesn’t allow me to say ‘things like that are all left to Lord von Christ’ at all, much less the truth that ‘actually Günter will then toss them to Lord von Voltaire’.

When it comes to the details of Shin Makoku, everyone around me is clearer than I am.

What is this?

Someone who calls himself king knows nothing about his own country?

That just means I’m a noob! Even if I’m scolded a million times, there’s nothing I can say against it.

“Come to think of it, I’m a living, breathing example.”

The spy who exists not only as a bodyguard, Josak then opens his mouth to help me out of this mess.

“See, since I have both mazoku and human blood, I’m deemed as worthless in the countries who believe that humanity is everything, but Shin Makoku took me in. Right?”

His last ‘right?’ is aimed at someone, I don’t know who.

"And Young... His Majesty spends a lot of his time studying abroad, so it's not easy for him to explain to you Shin Makoku's ways right now. Why don't you talk about how the country you study in deals with it, aren't you staying there for long periods of time so you can bring in the admirable qualities into our country?"

"Mn—Over there..."

Over there, that is, over on earth, how do we deal with it?

I was so certain that they were refugees, because I had witnessed them squeezed like sardines in a tiny boat asking for help. I had seen images like that several times before on TV.

Like people who reach civilization after crossing the Sahara, or people risking their lives, adrift on a rocky boat.

What happened to them later? What kind of fate was in store for them?

"If it's other countries, they usually just accept the refugees. As for policies..."

America is known as the cultural melting pot and the country of immigrants, but immigrants and refugees are still different. As for Japan...

I feel so guilty I just want to bow my head, and then sit on the ground and draw circles on the wooden floor.

"...Don't ask me too constructive questions!"

Josak, I'm sorry, you helped me cover up but I wasted it.

"B-but, sending them back to Seisakoku before determining the truth, and having them travel so far under such conditions, is truly unforgivable. Making them ride over the car-passenger limit, and squeezing them into the bottom of a smelly ship... Wait, since it's a ship, then I should say they are over the boat-passenger limit. And there are girls without an overcoat to wear in such cold weather, you should at least lend them clothes! And feed them three meals a day! Distribute food and blankets to everyone, those are basic human rights, right?!"

"Basic... human... rights?"

Saralegui echoes stutteringly, surely this is the first time he's heard the term.

“But, Yuuri... they’re slaves!”

“SI—”

I lost, I just can’t get across our cultural gap. The blood speeding up in my veins makes me feel dizzy.

In the lacking information room of my brain, any knowledge to do with slavery stops at ancient history.

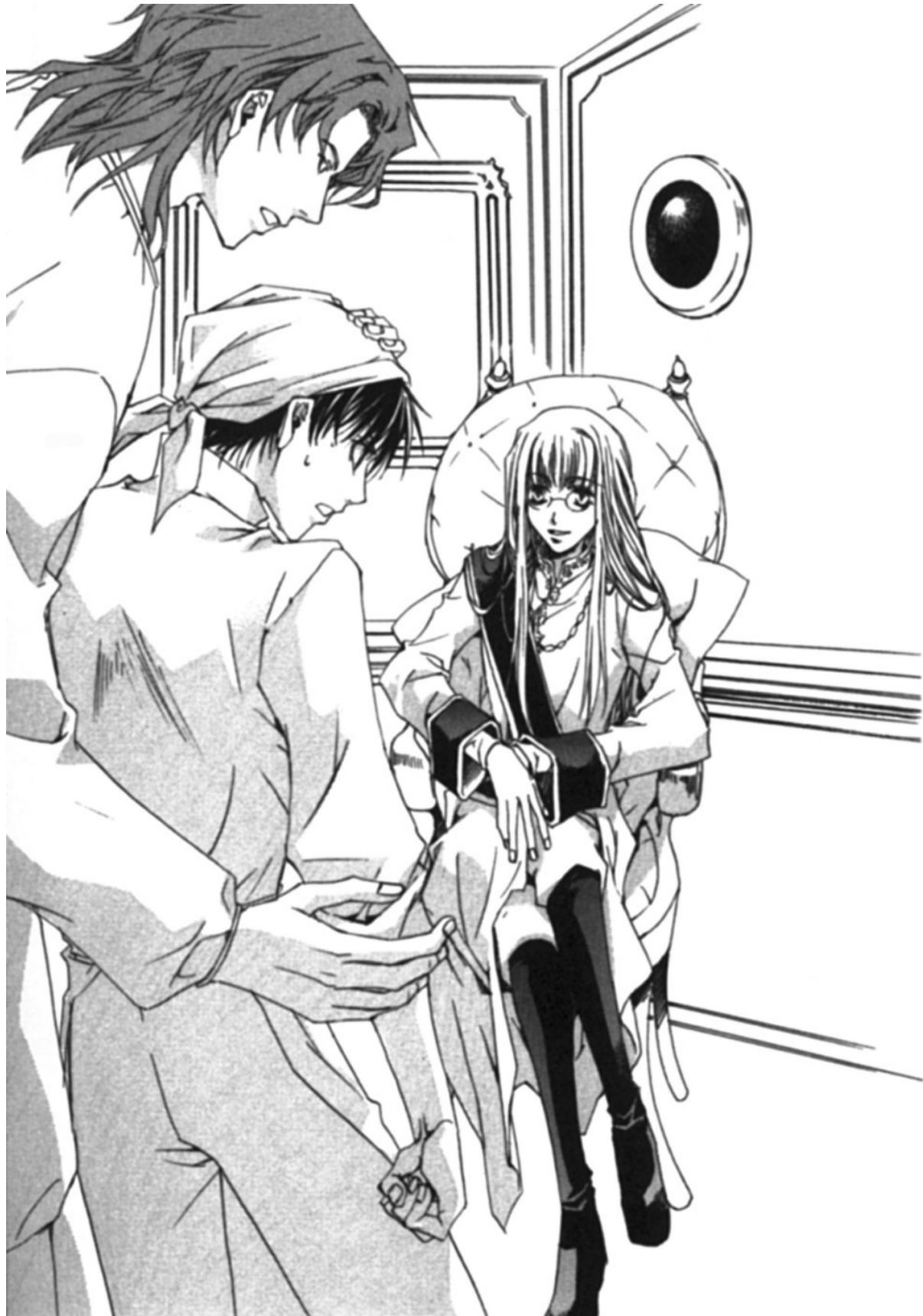
The European countries in the Age of Discovery, black slaves brought over from the African continent for manual labour...

“You said slaves... Which century is it now? How long has slavery been abolished? No, wait! Warring, developing countries are still trafficking people to this day... Crap, it’s getting even more messed up!”

Due to the sudden increase in activity, my brain seems to be on the verge of overheating.

I fall backwards, the back of my head crashing into Josak’s chest.

“Young Master, you can do it! Keep going, Young Master!”



I'm trying. But even though I'm putting my all into it, there's a new obstacle every time, and in that instant I'm feeling a little dejected.

Geez, I can't stand it! Why are there so many tough problems happening all the time in the alternate world?

"Sorry, Sara. The country I live in doesn't have that sort of system, and I've never been to a country with slavery before, either, so what I'm saying might not

be very convincing. But if they have to be treated cruelly just because they're slaves, no matter how I think about, it just isn't right!"

"No slaves? Really?"

Saralegui is genuinely surprised, pressing his beautiful fingers against his lips,

"Then who's in charge of the sewage?"

"Ah—About that~"

I turn back, but Josak is looking off into the distance.

"Low-ranking soldiers."

"Then what about the dangerous irrigation process, or mining works under harsh conditions?"

"Also the low-ranking soldiers. What, so Shin Makoku's low-ranking soldiers aren't treated as humans~"

The previously silent Lord Weller interrupts Josak in a teasing tone.

"Stop sighing. Besides training, they still have a chance at promotion!"

"That's true!"

From this exchange alone, you can tell the top-and-bottom relationship between the two.

"Anyway, Saralegui, this has nothing to do with slaves or the poor, status or wealth. Everyone is born equal... Though talking about this to you so suddenly is probably useless. To put it simply, you can't let them starve without bread to eat, resorting to stealing from the kitchen to survive."

"Eh, why don't they have bread? Then..."

In my sixteen years of life, I never once thought I would personally hear this famous line.

And Sara says it so nonchalantly,

"Let them eat cake!"

I am completely and utterly defeated by those words, presenting an 'orz' pose, both my palms flat on the coarse, splintered wooden floorboards.

It feels as though my world has suddenly gone pitch black, and there's a lonely spotlight shining down on me from the ceiling.

If I'm the noob king, then Saralegui should be the super X king, the type that believes in eating cake when there's no bread.

He literally is Queen Marie Antoinette incarnate.

"Queen... Queen Marie."

"Your Majesty, if you don't mind, please use this."

Josak bends down and hands me a lacy silk handkerchief.

"Thanks, Gurrier. I can barely stand it anymore, I'm so tired... Feel like sleeping... Eh, wait a sec! What's with this tremor?"

A small tremor different from the movement of the waves, is transmitted throughout my body from my palms and knees on the ground.

Unlike the familiar rocking of a ship, this feels stronger, almost like the purr of an electrical motor.

"It's a current!"

"It's a giant squid!"

The owner of the ship, Shou Shimaron king Saralegui, and the experienced soldier, Josak, make their predictions at the same time.

Sara says with a solemn expression,

"Recently the ocean around Seisakoku has currents that change form according to the seasons, so there are only certain time frames throughout the year when they can cross the sea. We predicted that there should be a few more days for this year, and thought that we should be able to make it across these waters in time, but after all the sea is also a part of nature, perhaps the path of the current changed earlier than expected."

I'm a bit dazed after listening to that, but it should be something like how, when the tide rises and falls, there are loud sounds at the bay caused by whirlpools.

And the tremor that I could only feel in my hands and feet before is now

getting more and more intense, the whole ship shaking so badly it makes one wonder if there's a submarine approaching.

The bottle on the table starts clattering. The liquid inside spills out.

"What's the worst case scenario?"

"I'm not too sure, either, because I also only experienced this when I was an infant. But I heard that if you get pulled into the current, even the most experienced seamen will find it hard to get out; if it's an inexperienced cargo ship helmsman, then we'll never reach Seisakoku no matter what. And not just that, the chances of the ship sinking are also..."

"But the possibility of a big squid is not zero! The guy that has ten thick white tentacles, hard skin but tender flesh."

The spy happily licks his lips, guessing 'it should be a squid, right?' as his hand even moves to his sword.

"I just happen to have a craving for squid tempura right now. I want to play the role of a young wife in the prime of her life who wants to challenge creative cooking perfectly, then chop off a leg or two. LET'S GO! Bloody housewife!"

There's some commotion outside the cabin.

When we open the door, we see that the crewmen, panicked with their first emergency situation, are scuttling all over the large deck.

"According to calculations, it shouldn't be possible!"

I'm given a shock by the frustrated tone, turning my head to look sideways, and I see Saralegui biting his thin petal-like lips, probably regretting the mistake in his calculations.

"There are times in life when things don't go your way, Sara, especially when you're dealing with nature."

"No matter what..."

He grips his pretty slender fingers tightly, the freshly manicured nails digging deep into his fair skin.

"I cannot tolerate anything not going according to plan!"

That's a feeling of fury a king of failures like me has never experienced before.



Adalbert tosses the filthy rolled-up carpet onto the ground, and the caterpillar-like thing groans softly, lying there.

"Here, what you wanted."

"I thank you on behalf of my father."

"Torture him all you want, the guy doesn't die easily."

The next generation of the von Christ clan, Gisela, stands in the large captain's quarters, her hands on her hips and her gaze cold as she looks down at the thing wrapped up in the carpet.

Although her face is pale and bloodless, she is actually in better shape than everyone else present.

Having just completed a long-term mission, aiding the restoration of Caloria, even though she didn't get an acclimatization period and can't use magic here, her body and soul are in top form.

As for her adopted father, Lord von Christ Günter, since he was nearly burned in a fire, and then he unfortunately fell into the sea, add that to the nausea brought on by the houryoku, and all three factors have finally defeated him, so he is currently collapsed in the adjacent room.

Lord von Bielefeld Wolfram, who had gone through the same, has already recovered and returned to normal life without any serious problems.

Seeing as he's only eighty-two, youth seems to be on his side.

The place a certain few of Shin Makoku's most influential people are now gathered, is the drastic Sea Monk—Captain Sizemore's 'Friends on the Sea'.

During the political revolt at the Saralegui War Port, it was docked at the jetty directly opposite, and therefore was the first to receive the information and arrive at the scene.

Thanks to the efficiency and speed of 'Friends on the Sea' and its companions, Günter, who was thrown into the sea, and Wolfram, who was shot in the chest,

were both successfully rescued.

No amount of praise would be enough to thank Captain Sizemore and his quick thinking in the middle of a crisis, just like there never seemed to be sufficient hair, no matter how he brushed, on his receding hairline.

Other than Wolfram and Gisela, who had rushed over from Caloria, there's also Adalbert, leaning on the doorframe after he carried the caterpillar-thing over, so you could call this the worst combination ever.

Known as the third son of the 'very similar three mazoku brothers', Wolfram gets into a conflict with the traitor von Grantz Adalbert whenever they meet.

The cold and distant Adalbert can still control himself fairly well, but Wolfram looks like he's ready to draw his sword and attack him at any moment.

If it weren't for magician Gisela's decisive 'stay still or I'll paralyze both of you', blood would probably have long since been spilled.

On a side note, right now the 'omnipresent Dakaskos' is cowering in a corner of the room, trembling.

And outside the wide open door, there's a group of people spectating at a certain distance, that's the crew of 'Friends on the Sea'.

And behind the wall of people, the nice man jumping up and down with what looks like a few baby bird feathers on his head, that would be Captain Sizemore.

"Oomph!"

The one sticking his head out of the carpet for a breath of fresh air, is the former Shou Shimaron model soldier, even known as Saralegui's loyal dog—Nigel Weiss Maxine, also the man who made famous the cropped ponytail in Shou Shimaron.

Wolfram leans on the walking stick that was once Yuuri's—'Windpipe Number 1', pointing at the man on the ground as he says,

"It's him! This is the guy who attacked Yuuri and I, jari!^[1]"

Having just recovered, his voice is still very raspy, so much so that he can't enunciate his words properly, evoking sympathy from everybody.

"Mmph, you're the mazoku from... What's happening here? Why was a mazoku wearing King Saralegui's cloak? And standing at the place he usually stands?!"

"We were asking you! Do you know the repercussions of attacking an official ambassadorial envoy like us, who had travelled so far across the sea?"

"No, I..."

"What was the situation, tell me!"

Squatting on her knees, Gisela approaches Maxine, lifting his face with her exceptionally pale hand.

Those gentle fingers she usually uses for healing, are now sunk deeply into his matted beard.

"Since Kinan got away, I guess we can only ask this guy's body, Aiya, my mistake, what I meant was, this guy's mouth. If I recall correctly, you're Maxine, right? As members of the opposition force within the Shou Shimaron army, why did you shoot at our king? Even if your aim wasn't His Majesty, but to assassinate the boy king Saralegui, what were you trying to accomplish? Right, don't waste our time, come on and be honest now."

The corners of her lips curve into a malevolent smile, which isn't a good omen any day. The worker soldiers, who are used to her yells and torture on a daily basis, all straighten their backs and brace themselves for a bashing.

It's coming, it's starting, anytime now, get ready!

"Hmph, I don't care if you can get it out of me, I was just interrogated anyway."

"...Interrogated, you say?"

The healer—Gisela raises her eyes, her powerful voice becoming very violent.

This is precisely our Shin Makoku army medical team's famous finishing move—the Sergeant mode.

"Listen closely, human! We mazoku's medical team will never accept an enquiry method as old and barbaric as torture! But to this day, humans are still endlessly interrogating as a means of gathering intelligence! Such as plucking

nails, digging eyeballs, and cutting off the honey mushroom downstairs! What's wrong with you people? Why are you backing away? Don't tell me you're worried about your honey mushrooms down there?!"

The baby bird head jumping up and down behind the people wall, and the sparkly-headed kitchen apprentice Dakaskos, wave their right hands and heads in fervent denial.

"Listen up , you cowardly soldiers! We, the Shin Makoku army medical team, will never use such prehistoric methods. From now on, healing must be done together with science and brains! Remember that, you horse-butt head."

Timid Maxine is almost scared out of his wits, going one on one with the force of the Sergeant mode.

"Let's pretend I have here Lady von Karbelnikoff Anissina's new prototype—MAjor Danger(*) Potion I and II!^[2]! Do you bunch of idiots think Lady von Karbelnikoff Anissina is scary?!"

"Scary, Sergeant!"

The soldiers outside reply loudly upon questioning, but as a matter of habit they all remain straight as rulers and don't move an inch.

"Then between the Poison Lady Anissina and your officer, who is scarier?!"

"Sergeant, of course, Sergeant!"

"You bunch of concrete-brained ass-kissers! At times like these you should compliment the enemy, who'd have thought that despite being so stiff and straight normally, you know how to sweet talk!"

"Yes! We will change, Sergeant!"

Gisela is sounding out her men, but the truth is she's in a wonderful mood.

"You haven't changed at all, huh, Sergeant..."

Adalbert says, rubbing his butt-shaped chin.

Even Wolfram, who just recently got to know Gisela's true form, is so scared of the Demon Sergeant's intimidating aura that he's backed up all the way to the wall.

Looks it's best not to get on this tigress' bad side.

"Right, back to business—"

Holding in her hand a long brown bottle, Gisela continues,

"This is the Poison Lady Anissina's new drug."

At the mention of the creator's name, Maxine's expression changes drastically.

"I-is it poison? You say it's created by the Poison Lady, so it must be poison?!"

"Hmph!"

After what sounds like the yell of someone accustomed to using brute force, Gisela forces open Maxine's jaw, stuffs the green Potion I inside, then she pushes the jaw joint back up, closing his mouth, setting the bones into place then grabs his head and shakes it forcefully.

"Since you refuse to spill, then I have no qualms using force to get you to confess! Right. Be honest with me, tell us your motives!"

"Hm-um-umph! Hm-um-umph! Mmph!"

Crop Pony is rocking forward, backward, left, right.

After Potion I is thoroughly shaken in Maxine's mouth, light green bubbles start flowing down the cropped beard, symbolic of his military status.

And then Gisela pinches a horizontal long bottle, raising it high into the afternoon sun.

"After that, this seems to be the blood red Potion II. After drinking Potion I, if you drink Potion II within a certain timeframe..."

"Blergh—What happens if you drink that?! Bleerggghh—if those two mix, will it be dangerous or not?! Or is Potion II the antidote? What the hell is it? Blergh?!"

"If you want to know, hurry up and spill it! Might as well tell you, the manual says, 'Anissina is composed half of gentleness'... Hmph!"

Gisela tosses the manual onto the ground.

"Gentleness—How is she gentle—"

Succumbing to the tense atmosphere, Dakaskos falls backwards like a log.

Although he didn't take the MaChicken Danger Potion, but he's foaming in the mouth and white in the eyes.

Even the cold onlooker, the only anti-mazoku Adalbert speaks up,

"Hey, before there are any more casualties, do yourself a favor and get out of this hell, Maxine. Besides, it's not as though you need to shield anyone anymore, right?"

"S-s-s-shut your crap! I, Nigel Weiss Maxine, will never succumb to such petty threats... What?!"

Victims start appearing in the wall of people outside.

Unable to withstand the terror of Gisela's aura and etcetera, people start crashing to the ground, one after another.

"Hey, Maxine. You have siblings too, right? Don't make them too upset. Just pretend you're doing it for your old mom who will cry for you, just confess to compensate for your crimes. After you confess, I'll bring you some katsudon [3]."

The muscleman is actually the good cop taking the sentimental approach, what a surprising Adalbert.

"Well, we don't mind either way! I kind of want to see how long it'll take to break a spineless, stupid beard guy like you. Otherwise I might as well throw you into Caloria's city area, the people there sure hate your guts. That way you'll definitely get nerves thinner than a mosquito's leg."

...While Gisela is the threatening bad cop.

"Ah, come to think of it..."

Wolfram, who believed that 'silence is golden' and kept quiet until now, seems to have suddenly thought of something, raising his head.

"Recently Mother has suddenly been working very hard on her whipping techniques, muttering something about some beautiful mature woman warrior... Right, it was the 'Beautiful Mature Woman Warrior Cheri, and now I'm going to get together and punish you', something like that. And then there was 'I really wanna play with that Mr Beard again'..."

"Eh—"

Looks like the threat of the Beautiful Mature Woman Warrior's leather whip is more effective than the city he destroyed.

Maxine's heavily scarred face is taut, his blood-shot eyes overflowing with tears again as he pleads,

"I-I'll spill, I'll spill, I'll spill! I'll say anything, just don't let me see that gorgeous cheesy woman again!"

"Gorgeous che... You're so rude! You should say she acts cute, acts cute!"

All the men present look diagonally downwards, thinking,

'How come the person in question's son is also so cruel with his words.'

"Although the reason is very weird, but as long as you sincerely want to confess. Then please tell us! Nigel Weiss Maxine, why did you want to assassinate His Majesty and His Excellency Wolfram?"

Crop Pony clears his throat before replying.

He purposely wanted to show off, but his beard was trembling.

"My target this time really wasn't the mazoku brat. Although that double-black mazoku has gotten in my way several times, but this time he's here with the special ambassadorial envoy, and assassinating an official guest will damage our country's reputation, so our target..."

The former Shou Shimaron soldier pauses suddenly, sighing a long and painful sigh before continuing,

"...was His Majesty Saralegui and his men. Actually I want to ask you, why was there a mazoku wearing His Majesty Saralegui's clothes standing on that spot in the flagship?"

"You mean the light aqua blue cloak? I heard that Sara fellow gave it to Yuuri to block the sun and sea breeze, though later I took it anyway."

Lord von Bielefeld's good-looking brow creases, its depth not losing out to his older brother.

"Yuuri heard from someone that the spot behind the helmsman is best for looking at the scenery, saying something about standing there you can feel the

true awe of leaving the bay, and saying the traditions of setting sail is where the essence of a voyage lies..."

"The one who told him was probably that Saralegui fellow, huh? That Shou Shimaron king let the black-haired brat wear his own clothes, then stand in his own favorite place... What a sneaky little brat! Looks like he knew long ago that there was someone out to assassinate him, meaning information on your rebellion motion has long since been leaked, Maxine."

"The shooter was Kinan, I think."

Back to being the female medical officer, Gisela says the name of a man who was once her adopted father's subordinate.

Kinan had broken off from the team on the trip to Shou Shimaron, and was even suspected of stealing Lord Weller's left arm.

"He was Shin Makoku's number one archer. Though he was fired from the army for certain reasons, he does indeed have the ability to shoot any target. And now we know the reason he headed for Shou Shimaron..."

"Wait, what? Why didn't you tell me?"

"Truth is, I just found out from Lord von Christ myself. Never mind what Kinan's reasons were, the main thing is he's betrayed the country, and he even took a dangerous item to Shou Shimaron. To the Shimaron army, there's nothing luckier than that, because they had a usable pawn volunteer itself. You must have been really glad to find a suitable shooter, huh, Nigel Weiss Maxine?"

"That's right."

"Ecstatic?"

"Not to that extent."

Looking at Maxine, who is starting to confess, Adalbert speaks up.

"But if he were assassinated while another king was visiting, wouldn't that hurt Shou Shimaron's image as well? If he can't even control his own army, surely the other countries' opinion of you would decrease greatly. If he got intel on the rebellion long ago, couldn't he have prevented anything from happening? What's more, the mastermind..."

As he speaks, he mercilessly uses the amphibious sturdy sole of his boots to kick the curled-up caterpillar-like body.

“Uu-ya!”

“...is this idiot over here? Hey, stop screaming like a sealion!”

“If he wanted to catch them all and eradicate the rebels in one fell swoop, he should have taken the chance to arrest them when they were in the middle of an actual operation. Normally, even if you get a lot of people, there will always be some others hiding underground. Since it’s a military faction, those who don’t participate would be deemed as cowards, right? And... That really was Kinan, was it, Your Excellency Wolfram?”

The third son nods calmly, Gisela is so much better a speaker than he is, having her specialize in healing is such a waste.

“His plan of action is excellent. If the archer is a mazoku, and if His Majesty the Maou... Although I am extremely reluctant to say this... But should His Majesty the Maou tragically lose his life, they can announce to the other countries that it was due to the mazoku’s internal conflict. This way, not only can he preserve his life, he can also assassinate our king. If he succeeds, it won’t cause much of a discussion internationally, and if he fails, at least he can wipe out the opposition within the country, so whatever the outcome, it’s win-win for him. This is a sort of insurance policy, to calmly consider up to this point, it can be seen that from the beginning, Saralegui... to His Majesty...”

Gisela shakes her head several times, not aimed at anyone in particular, but out of admiration for the enemy’s intellect.

But Wolfram’s pale face has reddened completely.

“That brat still dares to act all innocent, approaching Yuuri...!”

“Please wait, Your Excellency Wolfram, where are you going?”

“I’m going to save Yuuri.”

“Where are you going to save him?”

“It doesn’t matter where! Right! It’s Seisakoku, I want to go to Seisakoku too! There’s no time to waste here! I have to save Yuuri! That guy can’t be without

me.”

“Please calm down, Your Excellency.”

Although she’s aware that doing this is going against her station, but Gisela still grabs the previous Maou’s third son by the arm.

“Has milord forgotten? Seisakoku is the territory of the shinzoku, there’s a large gathering of people with powerful houryoku there. Just the ground itself is different from the continent governed by Shin Makoku, and the land where the humans live now, you know? People with strong maryoku will only get in the way there.”

She is absolutely right.

Although his and Günter’s maryoku still count as strong, but once they’re within Shimaron borders, there’s nothing they can do.

But at the same time, he can’t just bite his nails and wait in safe place just because of that!

“Am I the kind of person who would listen to others like a good boy when faced with an objection?”

She shakes her head slowly. Her plait sways around on her back.

“No.”

“Since you know that, let go.”

“Before you rush out of this room alone, I believe there’s something else milord should do.”

At this moment, Dakaskos wakes and pushes himself up, rubbing his hairless scalp with his palm.

He pushes past the wall of people, finally seeing Captain Sizemore’s face, and the Crop Pony desperately wiggling his body rolled inside a filthy woolen carpet, trying to loosen the ropes, and then the solemn crewmen on duty announce in a loud voice, “There’s a small ship arriving.” Seems like the backup from Caloria is here.

Next door, however, there’s a huge and sudden crash, sending the walls with

the same wood-pattern a-creaking, looks like Günter has fallen off his bed.

Wolfram suddenly remembers the people he has always respected, murmuring the new king's name.

To relax his stiff fingers, he grasps his right hand twice, and says,

"Assemble a tracking team at once!

"No matter what, we cannot let His Majesty fall into Shou Shimaron hands!"

References

1. ↑ The suffix Wolfram uses at the end of a sentence when he's upset/being childish. Similar to Günter's -tosa.
2. ↑ In Japanese マージョルノキケーン; 'maajoru no kiken' the maajoru part is a mix of "MA" and "major". So 'maajoru no kiken' can be understood as "MAjor's Danger" : the MA Sergeant Gisela's dangerous potion; but it can also refer to the side effects of mixing both potions, which as the users' manual states is (very dangerous) a major danger.
3. ↑ Katsudon (カツ丼?) is a popular Japanese food, a bowl of rice topped with a deep-fried pork cutlet, egg, and condiments. The dish takes its name from the Japanese words tonkatsu (for pork cutlet) and donburi (for rice bowl dish). It has become a modern ritual tradition for Japanese students to eat katsudon the night before taking a major test or school entrance exam. This is because "katsu" is a homophone of the verb 勝つ katsu, meaning "to win" or "to be victorious". It is also a famous gag of Japanese police films: many people think that suspects will speak the truth with tears when they have eaten katsudon and are asked, "Did you ever think about how your mother feels about this?" Even nowadays, the gag of "We must eat katsudon while interrogating" is popular in Japanese films. (Source from Wikipedia, of course.)

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

The Japanese oceans ripped apart by a typhoon.

The scenes I saw on TV during September, are now being reenacted before my eyes.

The only difference is I'm on a boat, standing in the middle of the storm. Although I say storm, the sky is clear and blue.

The clouds are moving a bit quickly, but all you see is the clear winter sky, even the winds aren't that strong.

But the surface of the sea has waves crashing into each other and whirlpools.

The waves beating on the sides of the ship sweep across the deck, tall ones falling over our heads even ram continuously at the mast.

The guard ship patrolling around us has been blocked by the fierce waters, trapped in the distance.

Looking and the sky and the sea now, gives me the false impression of looking at heaven and hell.

"It shouldn't be... a giant squid, huh?"

"Of course not. Around the continent of Seisakoku, there's a special current known as the 'natural defense'. This side of the sea is only calm for little over ten days every year. If you miss that period, no matter how skilled the voyager, no one can reach their country. It's like having an invisible shield as hard as rock! It's also why they were able to stay in lockdown for the past few millennia."

Soaked to the bone by the water spray, we move to the control room.

As the ship is already slanted beyond any more slanting, we are forced to hold the rails on the walls and inch our way forth.

This feels a lot like the pirate ships I used to ride in those familiar amusement parks.

But Sara loses his grip on the slippery surface, and almost falls onto the slanting floor.

"Careful, Sara!"

Before I even reach out, Lord Weller has already grabbed his slender shoulder and pulled him back to his side.

Oh, right, because he gives off a very delicate feeling, I subconsciously feel like protecting him.

Problem is, he already has a dependable bodyguard by his side. He doesn't need an amateur like me worrying about him.

On the other hand, my bodyguard put his right hand over his eyes, shielding the light as he looks into the distance.

"What a shame, looks like I don't have the chance to show you my giant squid exterminating skills anymore. Ah—I get it. This isn't a squid monster's doing at all, it's Seisakoku's famous current, ain't it?"

"Whatever you say, Josak, but it's dangerous for you to stand so far ahead! Come back here quick, come back! Even if your biceps are really strong, if you're swept down there by the waves there's nothing for you to hold on to!"

"How mean, Your Majesty, do you only emphasize on my body?"

It's hard to tell who's the bodyguard, exactly.

Backing up to the entrance, Josak looks at me with a worried expression, "... The guard ships can't be seen with the naked eye anymore, and that's both ships. Logically it's impossible that they sunk, but it looks like they're quite far away from us now."

"What... does that mean?"

"We're being forced into entering enemy territory without any weapons at all."

I see, being a natural-born soldier, of course he would feel uneasy without a blade by his side for self-protection.

But we're a peaceful ambassadorial envoy, if someone coming supposedly for

peace shows off an exaggerated array off weaponry in self-defense, wouldn't that be getting everything upside down?

Of course I'll pray that the guard ships don't get in any trouble, but even if they're not coming along, I don't mind.

"But first we have to safely get to Seisakoku. Anyway, if we don't get past this obstacle, we'll probably end up as food for the fishes."

The control center of the boat is already soaking in water.

The three crewmen holding tightly onto the ship wheel are using all their weight to steady the ship's direction.

To prevent the ship for flipping over, they must cross the waves at the right time.

"Who's the star helmsman here?!"

That's like the term they use in the culinary world. Hearing Saralegui's voice, the man with the deepest colored hair turns around and says, "It's me, Your Majesty! But for safety purposes, please retire to your cabin and protect yourself with something soft!"

Saralegui presses his spectacle frame to stop his glasses from flying off on impact, asking, "Do you have experience crossing these waters?"

The star helmsman raises his eyebrows and widens his eyes, looking surprised.

"Of course not, Your Majesty."

"What about the captain?"

"Me neither, Your Majesty. Nationally-owned cargo ships can't approach Seisakoku."

The boy king 'tsks' unhappily, muttering,

"So at the end I'm the only one."

I don't understand what he means by him being the only one.

I look around to see if anyone else heard him say that, but the crewmen are putting their all in keeping the ship steady, looks like no one heard it.

By now I unconsciously grip my fist, telling them,

“Hang in there! No matter what, just hang in there! If there’s anything I can help with, please don’t hesitate to tell me!”

“Thank you... However, as the guest you had still better return to the safety of the cabin...”

The short man next to star chef murmurs, gritting his clenched teeth.

Sensing someone moving behind me, I turn around just in time to see Lord Weller walking out of the room.

His hair, shoulders and the back of his Dai Shimaron army uniform, have all been drenched and changed colors.

“Where are you...”

“Please return to the cabin, and Your Majesty Saralegui, too.”

Being forced under Josak’s protection, Saralegui makes a noise of displeasure, but he can’t stop me following after Conrad.

I think that he surely has a plan for the current situation, so I’m eager to find out as soon as possible.

“What do you want to do? Lord Weller?”

The pouncing waves beat on me mercilessly, if I’m not careful, there’s a high chance I will slip.

Just trying to catch up to him as I grab the rails is sapping me of my strength.

“Answer me!”

“I’m looking for someone.”

He walks down the stairs into the cabins, glancing at me.

After making sure that I haven’t been washed away, he sighs with an expression of resignation, “I told you not to come with me, there really is no stopping you... It’s dangerous here, so keep closer to me.”

“This concerns the fate of the ship I’m on, of course I’d want to know how to face this. Besides, where I want to go is my own choice, right?”

"But by doing this, you're forcing Josak to come find you after escorting Sara back to the cabins... You're as good at troubling your guards as always... Be careful not to slip, watch your step."

"I know that."

I brush my soaked fringe away from my face.

Seawater has gone into my eyes and nose, and my throat feels tight and horrible too.

I clench my fist, trying to wipe away the stinging pain on my face, but the corner of my eyes just gets more and more painful.

"Ah, if you rub like that, you'll..."

And after that Lord Weller falls silent, quietly crossing the pathway between the crates and lifting the floorboard from earlier to look into the dark ship bottom.

That's the place the alleged slaves, the shinzoku are being kept.

The condition inside can only be described as 'terrible'.

The water there is knee-deep, you can't even sit down anymore.

Add that to the fact that there's nothing sturdy and fixed in there to hold, so whenever the ship slants, people crash into the walls. Even so, they don't scream. They just moan quietly and bear it.

"Hey."

My voice attracts a few golden lights.

Those are the eyes of people who had risked their lives to escape Seisakoku, only to be deported back now.

"Are you all right?"

I really asked a stupid question, there's no way they are all right.

If we don't scatter them quickly, once the water comes in faster, they'll all get three strikes and an out.

But how to explain to them in a language they don't understand?

"Hey, if you don't get out of here now, you'll be in danger..."

Lord Weller turns back into the center of the ship, grabs a lit oil lamp and some paper he tore on the spot before jumping down, and I carefully climb down the ladder too.

"It'd be great if there are any seamen or former navy officers amongst them. Because if they are someone related to Seisakoku's sea transportation, perhaps they might have the skills to overcome this obstacle. At least they would definitely understand these currents better than Shou Shimaron crewmen."

"Ah, I get it! It's the 'Are there any doctors onboard?' approach, right?"

I don't bother about my rude 'what, so it's just like that' expression, and start yelling with all my strength in the middle of the shinzokus.

"Please help us! If any of us can steer a ship... Ah—Seriously, the language barrier again!"

"Hold this for me."

Lord Weller stuffs the oil lamp in my hands, and then starts drawing with the charcoal on the huge piece of paper. Uh—A sun?"

"Is that the sign of the electric source?"

"No!"

"Then what is it... Conrad, you don't seem to very good at drawing... Ah~ I get it! It's the ship wheel, are you trying to draw the wheel? Lend me that for a while!"

If art results can be classified into an average five levels!

Being someone of approximately the second level, I reach over for the charcoal and draw a huge ship wheel on the back of the paper.

Drawing like this should be OK, right? And then I lift it like a round girl, high over my head.

"Can anyone here steer a ship?! We're looking for someone who can turn the sort of circle on this paper!"

At first the shinzokus look at us like we're monsters, but before long they leave

the walls they were sticking to, and approach us slowly.

One man raises his hand timidly. His cheeks are sunken, and he looks like he'll faint anytime now, but his deep golden eyes shine brightly.

"Are you a helmsman? Thank goodness, Conrad, we found one, there really is one!"

"Yeah."

"Actually I was sort of skeptical too!"

We usher the man up the stairs without even asking him his name, because we have to get him to the control room as soon as possible, and ask him to help us cross the turbulent seas.

Conrad climbed up ahead of me, and I grab his hand, ready to leave the bottom of the ship.

"Wait a moment."

"What is it?"

"We can't leave these people here."

There are more than a hundred gazes trained on us, could this be the only exit?"

"There's no time now..."

"But what if the ship sinks? Staying down here, there's no way they can escape. Everybody, this floorboard, this piece of wood here, it's open! The situation is dire now, so there's not a single guard. Please be prepared to board a lifeboat at any moment."

But they just exchange uneasy glances, making me feel again the pain of a language barrier.

"Listen closely, this is open!"

"Your Majesty, please hurry."

Hearing the familiar title, I heave a sigh of relief, thank goodness we understand each other.

“Conrad.”

I lean on the sides of the wooden crates to make my way back to the cabins, but I still don't get it, so I speak up to ask Conrad, walking briskly beside me.

“Why didn't those people come out?”

That place is no different from a cave!

“Although shinzokus are different from humans... but they didn't get a humane treatment. If it was me, I'd have long since lost it, and would even go complain to the authorities.”

“Perhaps they were always taught not to resist, but...”

Just then, the man walking in front of Lord Weller turns around and says something to his companion.

“What happens after today is anyone's guess.”

He's probably talking about those who stayed where they were.

Although there were a few lines purposely lower in volume, but soon they become agitated yells.

Even if I can't understand the contents at all, but when the ship shakes abruptly, and the three of us are thrown onto the crates, he says a few words even I recognize.

Venera? This shinzoku man just said Venera?

That was the word that showed up in the letter to me.

Although we're not sure if it's the name of a place or a person, Günter did say it's most probably a proper noun.

So even if I don't understand the verbs he was saying before, I still get the noun Venera.

I clearly heard, in this thin man's spittle-flying highly-agitated speech, the word I know.

“Hey, you said Venera?! You just said Venera, didn't you?”

I grab his clothes and shake him hard.

His clothes are like the girl who distributed the food earlier, nothing more than a piece of cloth tied with a leather belt.

"Tell me, what is 'Venera'? The only hope Jason said, the thing Freddy asked to 'save'. Please tell me, how do I save it? What is Venera to you?"

"Your Majesty!"

The stick-like body seems to be in pain, the way I'm shaking it. Forget speaking, looks like he can't even breathe.

"Yuuri!"

Conrad forcefully wraps his arms around my waist, pulling me away from the shinzoku man.

My chin even knocks into his shoulder, the pain finally clearing my mind.

"You can't understand each other at all."

"Oh, yeah. Sorry... It was my fault... and this kind of question can't be asked with my level 2 art results."

The expression of the man who was randomly interrogated has become stiff out of fear and shock.

I don't know if he can understand my apology this way, so I bow my head to him one more time.

"...Let's go, or it'll be too late when the ship sinks."

"Does it start from the front?"

"Huh?"

His half-joking words make me forget about the crisis for a split second.

"When you say your art results are level 2, does that mean you're second best from the front?"

"Don't be silly, Conrad, of course I mean second last, counting from the back. It's okay, you don't have to comfort me."

We chat lightly as we climb upstairs, but once we reach there it's like the end of the world, because each of the crewmen is grabbing something to prevent

themselves from being swept away by the waves.

Some of them even tied themselves to a pillar using thick rope.

If I'm not careful while advancing, I'll probably fall flat on my face when the waves hit me from the sides.

The surface of the sea is so turbulent, but the sky is so beautiful it's otherworldly. The sunlight shining down from above is bright and warm. It makes the few of us, being tortured by nature, feel like we're being punished in hell.

But, just when I want to take a deep breath, my concentration is broken.

I had definitely distanced myself from the edge of the deck, but a green wave assaults me from above, hitting me on the face and loosening my grip on the corridor railing.

"Crap!"

Thankfully the rails on the edges of the deck blocks me near my stomach, preventing me from falling overboard, but I also have to thank Lord Weller's reflexes, since he is holding on tightly to the back of my kitchen uniform.

He would probably ask me 'are you okay', as usual.

I sneak a peek at the surface of the sea I nearly plunged into, and having rushed to my side, Conrad also glances at the ocean with his brown eyes.

There's a whirlpool there, a dark blue circle different from the surrounding waves.

"Are you okay..."

"So close, so close."

I keep staring at the unnaturally bright blue spot in the middle of the whirlpool, feeling as though I'm being sucked in.

I remember this feeling, but I can't remember where I felt it before, so it frustrates me.

Lifting my head to look at Conrad, now almost shoulder-to-shoulder with me, I realize that he seems to be thinking the same thing.

I even feel as though a white hand might come out from there, grab my neck

and pull me down.

Maybe I will painlessly, without a single clue as to where I am, be brought down to the depths of the sea where my lungs don't work...

It feels as though someone is calling my name from a distance, so I take an unconscious half-step forward.

Logically speaking, I wouldn't have fallen in.

If someone hadn't pushed me from behind.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

“It failed!”

On the roof of some hotel in the city, Murata Ken pulls his head out of the murky water, while red and white koi fish swim around his knees.

Fishy water drips from his hair as he turns to Bob, sitting on a chair under an umbrella.

“How?!”

“This is the exact VTR^[1].”

No one would have thought that the man wearing sunglasses, cocking his head, and playfully speaking Japanese is the Maou controlling Earth.

But speaking of controlling, you could say it’s hard to compare between him and Bill Gates.

Leaving puddles of water on the dry cement, Murata stares at the plasma screen.

“Damn, I was so close to getting Shibuya there. As long as I can reach his soul or consciousness, the rest of it is my forte, by then I can use that to go to where he is. But... did you get it?”

“Mn, very clearly.”

Though the picture captured in the water is blurry, but Murata’s body was taken perfectly.

“For a midair garden full of floating stuff, this is a pretty clear shot.”

“Yeah.”

Shouri forces himself in between Bob and Murata, who are whispering to each other, with his forehead.

“But—if we really get to the other world through a dirty pool on top of a hotel,

wouldn't it be ludicrous if we caused the koi to continuously disappear? Only cute spot-billed ducks and their babies can start a journey from this sort of place, wasn't it?"

Looking down from the bridge, Shibuya Shouri makes sarcastic comments while he stares at Bob's hand.

Only because he really wants to know if his brother's 'special' friend was telling the truth.

"It's not a matter of the location, you know! JUNIOR, what matters is the timing."

"Didn't I tell you not to call me JUNIOR, I'm not your son... Waa!"

Halfway through the recording, the top half of Murata's body disappears, and the one who yells is Shouri, from up on the bridge.

He grabs the red rails, shouting,

"H-he vanished! That's too weird, hey!"

"You can pretend it's supernatural photo and submit it, friend of my brother. But please don't forget to block my eyes with black lines."

Murata looks fascinated as he points at the upside-down images.

"See, we got so many. But after this one, a force from the other side immediately pushes me back here. So forget bringing Shibuya back, I even felt the space over here and over there colliding head-on, and both sides would bounce back to their original position. Otherwise, there would be a split second's chance to catch up to him."

Murata, who had instantaneously appeared in the image, disappears from waist up again.

Though this time it only lasts for a few seconds, and not too long later his entire body is floating on the surface.

"See? Because Shibuya's existence isn't very stable as it is, so sometimes I can feel it, and sometimes I can't, I couldn't get any clues at all that second time. What kind of place is he, exactly?"

"Probably somewhere maryoku can't reach?"

"Obviously, otherwise I'd feel more spirited, maybe even full of life. And also, this is useless now too, because the power is too weak to bring him back."

Murata takes the golden brooch off his chest as he says that.

After waving off the water on his glasses, he puts it on his palm and scrutinizes it closely.

"It wasn't Shibuya's to start with, so the attraction is rather weak. It might sound weird, saying it like this, but even if I follow his on-and-off trail, there's not enough power to get to where he is. On a side note, which clan's emblem is this? This should be a bird, right? It's been a few thousand years in this place, I can't remember emblems at all."

"I think this kind of thing lives around Austria, but when it comes to emblems, every clan seems more or less the same. I know I can't tell at all, does that count as a bird? I always thought it was a crocodile looking sideways."

To Shouri, who is standing at the side, their conversation gives him the urge to ram his head into the wall.

Normal people wouldn't confuse birds and bugs, right? The guy with the sunglasses, is there something wrong with his head?

Earth, is this okay?

Is it really okay to make an Uncle like this Maou?

He's the old man who was dancing the samba in the shopping streets with a cane in one hand, you know?

"...Better to just skip being governor, and jump straight to being Maou of the financial world."

He's starting to feel that it'd be better for him to inherit the position of Maou, perhaps that was Bob's plan all along.

But now isn't the time to be worrying about the future of the Earth, because his only brother was taken to an unknown world and has yet to return.

Wait for me, Yuu-chan! Big brother will come save you now!

"Hey, hey! The white glasses and black glasses up front!"

"What is it, colored glasses?"

"Don't call me colored glances! Let me go to that world too, c'mon, let me try, for all you know, I might be able to just flow over to Yuu-chan, just like that? After all, he and I share the same blood!"

"Don't be stupid!"

The old and new glasses people immediately retort.

"Didn't I already tell you, Shibuya's older brother? That's completely impossible, even if the entire Taepodong^[2] explodes. I have the soul of the Daikenja who was born there, and even then I faced a lot of hardships because I lived on Earth for too long. For someone like you, who was mentally and physically MADE IN Earth and have no maryoku whatsoever, it's impossible to get to that other world. If you don't have a particularly strong power leading you, it's mission impossible. Unless Mount Fuji erupts, or the Niagara Falls flow backwards.

That's just plain impossible.

"Even I didn't think it would be so hard, after all I've already completely become an Earthling. Good grief, who would have guessed that the "If you mix with scarlet, you'll become red"^[3] saying would end up being true."^[3]

"JAPANESE idioms really describe things well. Now what, Murata? Wanna go to the duck pond and try again?"

Murata shakes himself, trying to get the fishy water off his body, and sneezes loudly.

He looks just like a long-haired dog.

"When is R-Rodriguez getting here?"

On the other hand, the last man in the glasses trio crosses his legs on the red bridge and sits back down. Fiddling with his short student-like fringe, he mutters ineliguely,

"...Niagara... To make Niagara flow backwards... First I need a passport."

Being a committed brother, he has even prepared himself mentally to break the law, but his target doesn't seem to be Mount Fuji.

Feeling insecure about his subordinates' firepower, Lord von Bielefeld secretly sighs again, his tightly-knit brows ruining his handsome features.

Theoretically, he can understand why the strategy is to have those with no maryoku as the central fighting force.

"So then you will steer this 'Friends on the Sea' to Seisakoku, I trust you have no objections?"

"It is my honor, Your Excellency Wolfram!"

Captain Sizemore, whose principle is 'the world's seas are my seas', also known as 'the Drastic Action Sea Monk' salutes, his back completely straight. The warrior of the sea gives off a feeling of solemnity and authority.

"But the mission this time isn't limited to just the sea, you may be forced into operating on land... No objections there either, right, Sizemore?"

"Of course not, Your Excellency. Whether fortunate or otherwise, even though I was born as a mazoku and have very little hair, I never had any maryoku. Still, I hope that the skills and courage that I have accumulated all those years on the sea through booze, tears, men and women, can be of use on land."

"Mn. Ah—You said trained through men and women... N-never mind. To us, Seisakoku is an unknown continent, we have no idea what harsh environments await us. It could be a desert where dry winds run wild, or a swamp where the air is moist enough to feel, and the smell of rot permeates. This trip could be torture, but before we bring His Majesty back safely, I hope you will stay strong to the end of the mission."

"L-leave it to me, Your Excellency! As for how to deal with the harsh surroundings, we will shave all our hair, cleanly and completely, before leaving, so please don't worry!"

Though he says the words with his mouth, perhaps he's reluctant to part with

his beautiful hair, because Sizemore's eyes are clouded with tears.

"Are you talking about hair? Don't tell me you're talking about hair? If so then there's no need to shave it off, it's better to let it grow naturally, y'know."

Seeing the Wolfram he always treated as a kid mature into an adult so obviously, Sizemore is rather touched and starts sobbing.

Eventually the snot doesn't stop flowing, so he can only suck it back desperately.

"Ah~ Your Excellency, who would have thought that you've already grown up, and into such a handsome young adult! As your grandfather, I'm so happy!"

"When did you become my grandfather? Didn't we just meet for the first time last year?"

"And surely your mother on the other side of the star must be ecstatic too!"

"Sizemore! Have you joked enough? My mother is very much alive. Not only that, she's alert on the lookout for the chance to have another child."

The next one should be a girl, having a daughter will definitely be great.

Her Majesty the previous Maou touched her youngest son's golden hair, staring dreamily at the face that looks so much like hers.

As a woman, she still wants to enjoy her life for a lot longer.

"As Lord von Christ and I are unable to come with you, Sizemore, the leading power goes to you. Based on your previous results on the battlefield, I feel very assured. But this mission is after all different from a war, where you kill the enemy before you. Do you understand, Captain? I believe in your abilities, and hope that you do not disappoint."

"L-I-leave it to me!"

"And then bring that miscellaneous man Dakaskos with you... You may feel that there are too few soldiers, but I will do my best to send a second team as reinforcements. I will also dispatch a medical team and supplies, I hope you can wait patiently."

"If you're talking about the medical team, there's no need to wait."

Restored to her kind personality, Gisela gives a determined but friendly smile.

“I’ll come with you, in my father’s place.”

“But Gisela, didn’t you say that people with strong maryoku will feel extremely uncomfortable? Then you...”

“Yes, you are absolutely right. The closer we get to Seisakoku, the stronger the discomfort, and it’s possible that majutsu can’t be used either, the abilities of the healing hand will also disappear. But Your Excellency, I just hope you will understand this. Healing was never just majutsu. The true essence of healing is the healer’s heart, a kind heart is a necessity, and the most important thing is the modesty of wanting to heal the wounded.”

“...Modesty is the most important?”

The hands she put on Wolfram’s shoulders exert some force, threatening the immediate safety of his shoulders.

“That’s why, Your Excellency, even if I’m unable to use majutsu I still want to head to Seisakoku, and continue healing my beloved soldiers, or any local casualties. Did you know, Your Excellency? The military academy’s famous medical instructor... ‘The Men Lose Their Ears’, what her famous last words were?”

Shaken continuously by the agitated Gisela, Wolfram’s blended right brain finally remembers the portrait hanging in the academy.

“‘The Men Lose Their Ears’... I remember, it’s the White Demon?”

“She once said, ‘Why do we heal? Because the wounded are piled right there!’”

Hey~ It shouldn’t be ‘piled’, it should be ‘lying’, right? Why did she treat soldiers like objects?

But just when the Sergeant’s powerful words pump up everybody present—

There’s a terrifying sound of something being dragged down the hallway, and low moans, sending chills down everyone’s spines.

“Wol—fram--!”

Psssst—Psssst---

“Wo—Ifra—m!”

Psssst—Psssst---

Dakaskos' voice is trembling when he speaks, while Wolfram points at himself warily.

“Y-Your Excellency, that's calling you.”

“Mi? It's calling mi?”

Just as everyone's fear peaks, someone roughly kicks open the previously shut door to the captain's quarters.

The brave muscleman—Adalbert opens the door when everyone is waiting with bated breath.

“Waa!”

The door slamming into his face, Lord von Christ Günter falls over comically.

“What, so it was Günter?”

“It's wrong to say it like that, right? I dragged my houryoku-affected spinning head, and my body that cannot walk properly due to seasickness, and worked so hard just to get here!”

He makes it sound like such a monumental task, but the problem is the room where he was resting is just next door.

As soon as Lord von Christ Günter sits down on the chair his adopted daughter offers him, he puts an expression that says ‘And now I want to drink tea’.

It is only when Wolfram rolls his eyes at him that he remembers his reason for coming to this room.

“Right, right, the reason I dragged myself here despite my illness... Wolfram, it's because I thought of the ideal way to help you, whose maryoku is weaker than mine.”

“You say my maryoku is weaker than yours?”

Hearing the displeased tone coming from the pretty boy with high self-esteem,

Günter suddenly shouts,

“Do you want to go to Seisakoku—?”

“I want, I want to go—”

Not only is he instantly hooked by the nose, Wolfram even raises his hand.

“Very well. Then allow me to perform the von Christ clan’s secret technique, passed down through many generation, on your body.”

Stop pretending, Wolfram looks at his adopted daughter Gisela suspiciously.

But perhaps she didn’t hear what her adopted father was saying, because she’s looking off to the side.

“Although it was never used on anyone before, this is my top secret specialty.”

“Specialty? It’s not something like sex reassignment or appendicitis, is it?”

“That’s surgery, not specialty, and besides, you should ask Anissina for something like that. Mine is an even more transcending specialty, it’s a forbidden technique to completely seal of the opponent’s maryoku.”

“Forbidden technique... You aren’t using me as an experiment, are you?!”

“Of course not, that was a very rude thing to say. Don’t compare me to Anissina, that’s rather hurtful.”

Günter pushes up the reading glasses he’s been wearing a lot recently, frowning the face pale from blood loss and the influence of houjutsu.

“The reason you can’t head to Seisakoku, is because your maryoku is still considered strong. So if you seal it, you should be able to go to His Majesty’s side...”

He throws open his arms, covered with too many ornaments on his sleeves, and suddenly takes Wolfram into his embrace.

Everyone holds their breath and focuses on the scene before them, because it looks like a huge bear attacking a small deer.

“L-let go of me, Günter! I can’t bre... Are you trying to kill me... Hugging so tightly!”

“Ah~ Mm, Wolfram, so mean~ Aha—Mm!”

“Let go... Let... Really...”

“Ah—Don’t tell me, Wolfram, OH—YEAH—”

He wraps the frozen Lord von Bielefeld into his arms, even pulling up his beautiful pale grey hair with his hands, and then, making some heart-breaking panting sounds, rubs his own head as though he’s washing his hair, an action worthy of being known as history’s most outstanding destructive force.



Gisela has gone white, and this does not mean she was born White Gisela.

She just doesn't want to face her respected adopted father's dramatic change in personality when it comes to real life.

As for everyone else, they remain completely silent, and turn around as one unit, banging their heads onto the wall fiercely.

Because they can't watch anymore, and go on to decide that such a terrifying

image must never linger in their memory.

It should be a dream, this is definitely a dream.

That beautiful prime minister—Lord von Christ Günter, actually reached his demonic claws out to Yuuri's fiancé, His Excellency Wolfram!

Amongst the people ramming into the wall with empty eyes, only Sizemore and Adalbert are mumbling, 'like father, like son'.

Even though the two don't share any blood relations, they still managed to become such an intimate father and son pair.

Only Maxine, lying in a corner of the room, has his eyes tightly closed and froze like a stone.

He is the only person to witness the historical secret technique with his own eyes.

After a period of time so long people started mistaking it for forever, Lord von Christ finally leaves Wolfram's side and sits on the chair.

"Oh-ho, thanks for that—"

It could just be a psychological effect, but it seems as though his skin is smoother and shinier, his cheeks flushed and bright, just like a cat who just ate the canary.

Having just absorbed the essence of youth, the super bishie looks like he even wants a toothpick to clean his teeth after a good meal.

On the other hand, released from his embrace, Wolfram's body has gone completely limp, and he falls to his knees like a young lady, staying there motionlessly.

"Y-Your Excellency, Your Excellency Wolfram?!"

Gisela pats his cheeks gently a few times before he finally regains consciousness.

Being even more heartless than his daughter, Günter just sits on his chair and looks down at Wolfram.

"Good, now stand up, Lord von Bielefeld Wolfram. After that, the maryoku

that always existed within your body has been wrapped up by that shiny membrane of mine, and won't be released until I undo the technique. In other words I will always exist within you, so even if my body can't go with you, my soul can follow you to His Majesty's side."

And therein lay his true intentions.

He isn't just purely sympathizing with Wolfram, what he really wants is to use this chance to go to Yuuri's side.

And his chosen method is by having part of his spirit hitchhike on someone else's body, a method that troubles others.

"Why does it have to be you, of all people? And in my body?! Stop joking around, I don't want accept such a disgusting secret technique!"

"But it has already been done, right?"

You shouldn't be saying "right", right? It's not "right" at all! is what everyone said at the same time, their voices mixing like okonomiyaki ingredients. Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki is His Majesty's favorite.

"You want to go, right? You want to go to His Majesty's side?"

"O-Of course I do."

"Then what else is there to worry about? Now that your maryoku is more or less gone, you can head to Seisakoku, flooded with houjutsu users! Although I don't want to be connected to you physically and spiritually twenty-four seven either, but in order to go to His Majesty's side, it's the only choice I have. Since my physical body cannot be used, at the very least I have to put in some effort with my soul. Ah~ Your Majesty... If it's possible, how I'd love to be one with you. I'm already tired of this body and its naturally powerful maryoku... Cough! Coughcough!"

When he takes his hand away from his mouth, he finds it stained with bright red blood.

Günter slumps weakly to the ground, saying,

"...Goodness, it's blood."

"It came from your nose, your nose."

"We digress! Anyway, Wolfram, I'm pinning all my hopes on you now. Come, take this with you."

He pulls away the sleeve ornaments and reaches inside, pulling out a thin circle of string and forcefully hanging it around Wolfram's –who has yet to recover—neck, there's even a pale grey pouch hanging on the end of the circle.

"God—It's wet! Why is it wet?!" (TN: The Chinese term can already be read as 'Heavens', but that doesn't sound like something Wolf would say...)

"It's not wet, it's just a little moist, perhaps it caught some of my sweat when I was sleeping. That's a charm woven from my hair, a hundred per cent pure hair, I call it 'Günter's Protection'."

Lord von Bielefeld feels as though he's been cursed. Looks like he'll either be strangled, or decapitated in his sleep. Deep disgust almost makes him faint.

"It's too—too disgusting..."

"Listen carefully, when you're in mortal danger, you just have to grip this 'Günter's Protection' tightly and chant the mantra, 'Gün Gün Gün Gün Gün, Gün Gün Gün Gün Gün, Gün Gün Gün Gün Gün', and I may even be able to go to the place you are."

"Another long, stupid and meaningless sentence."

"Uh—Can we open our eyes now?"

Dakaskos, who was ramming into the wall until the last moment, asks timidly. Maybe he finally noticed the atmosphere, because Lord von Christ looks around on his knees, realizing that everyone looks pale.

"What happened? What a sad thing it is, that witnessing such a rare ceremony is enough to scare you all witless? Ah! How embarrassing, how can you take up the grand mantle of His Majesty's sword and shield like that?"

Listening to those words coming from a man bleeding from his nose, everyone can't find the energy to be angry.

Günter puts one hand on his chest and the other on top of that, the stance of someone praying to His Majesty Shinou.

"Ah~ Your Majesty, von Christ Günter feels deeply uneasy, seeing these

cowardly and incompetent soldiers, led by a child of only eighty-two. O wise Shinou, please assist this last-moment tracker team.”

Even this is just an old man’s joke, if he’s allowed to continue, there’s no telling what he might say.

Wolfram angrily pulls Günter’s chair and sits on it, saying,

“So you look down on my ability?”

“Of course not. Based on your combat experience, though, I’m a little worried about your capability to lead when the two sides collide. I don’t know if you can make the right decisions...”

Despite just having lost to Lord Weller due to insufficient combat experience, he pretends that never happened and continues spouting big words with his hand on his forehead.

“Sizemore is brave and valiant, but he is, after all, more used to battles on the seas; instead of asking Dakaskos to pick up a sword, he would be more useful with a broom. Can a combination like this really bring back His Majesty? Firstly, in firepower alone I feel uneasy. A Wolfram who can’t use flames, is like melon bread without melon.”

This slightly difficult simile causes everyone to ponder for a while. Although Lord von Bielefeld purposely keeps his tone low, there’s no hiding the frustration in his heart.

“But the situation being as it is now, there’s no way to increase our firepower, unless you want us to wait until brother sends the Shin Makoku fleet over? You should have heard about the unnatural current near that continent, right? The time interval for sailing is almost over, if we postpone this any longer, there’s no guaranteeing we can reach Seisakoku safely.”

“That’s right, theoretically it should be like that...”

“Let me go too!”

The previously silent Adalbert leaves the wall he was leaning on.

“Feels quite interesting, let me give it a try.”

His sturdy chest is trembling with curiosity, and each side is taking turns to

twitch, too.

“You might not know this, but I’ve long ago abandoned my identity as a mazoku and my maryoku, so be it mazoku soil or a continent full of houryoku, there’s no difference to me. Maybe I’m unable to fight nobly like you all, but another sword arm is another...”

“Stop joking! Who wants to borrow your power!”

Wolfram yells, interrupting the traitor of the mazoku.

Technically he should maintain the dignity of a leader, and keep his composure, but he just can’t help it.

“How can we let the man who betrayed us, and who hates the mazoku, approach such an important king?”

“Hold it, stubborn brat!”

“Shut up, puppet muscleman! You have no right to call me that! And where did you learn my nickname from anyway?!”

“From a hotel full of female students.”

Adalbert replies calmly, such an interesting rumor had actually crossed borders.

“Hey hey hey, there’s no need to get so agitated over a nickname, right? Besides, if you won’t let me board the same ship just because I abandoned my identity as a mazoku, isn’t that rather unfair? You’re the commander in charge of an important battle, it won’t do for you to be so narrow-minded, huh?”

“What...”

Those blue eyes look down at Wolfram, who stood abruptly, from above.

“What a joke. You’re in charge of such an important mission, and you don’t even have the magnanimity to work together with a hated enemy? I really sympathize with the soldiers who have to work under such a narrow-minded commander.”

Feeling as though his innermost thoughts were seen through, Wolfram bites his lip tightly.

His patience as one of the Ten Nobles, and as the Maou's trusted subordinate, is actually being tested by someone he never even imagined.

Just a simple sentence, and he can reject this man's proposal, sending other loyal soldiers to assist.

But if someone asks him if that's the best decision, he simply can't guarantee that with a clear conscience.

If he wants to build a strong tracking team, then Adalbert's participation won't be any loss.

He is also a fighter, it'll be okay if he is treated as just another pawn.

And as long as a close eyes is kept on him to ensure he doesn't do anything that may harm them, then there shouldn't be any problems.

All that's left is Wolfram's own emotions, and there should be a sway to control that.

He tries his best to convince himself,

"This is for Yuuri."

Wolfram glares at the other man's eyes, opens his tightly-bitten lips, and remembers to curse 'you split-open butt-chin' before replying,

"...Fine, I'll let you on Sizemore's ship."

"That's the way, ah~ Right, I wanna bring this guy along too."

He pokes the caterpillar-like object thrown on the ground with the tips of his toes.

"That's the man who wanted to assassinate me and Yuuri!"

"Putting aside how hard it was for me to steal him especially out of Shou Shimaron's prisons, I have no intention of letting him ride comfortably to Shin Makoku, and the simplest way is to stuff him on this ship. There's no need to treat him as a person, either, just treat him as part of my luggage."

"...Up to you!"

Looking at his lips, curving up happily for goodness knows what reason, Wolfram turns around wordlessly, and after throwing down a simple 'you make

'sure to watch him properly', he leads Sizemore out of the room.

Because there are tons of things to prepare, and since Lord von Christ is unable to come with, everything can only be left to him.

"Hmph!"

The muscleman continues smiling evilly, and even hums happily.

Things are getting more and more interesting, it's been a long time since he was this happy.

He just didn't think that the third son, known for his hard-headedness, also has a leader's ability to make the right choice.

Looks like people do change, but that should also be something to do with the rookie Maou's appearance.

When the image of black hair and eyes floats into his mind, his expression relaxes unconsciously.

"Right, now let's see what expression that spoiled third son will have!"

"Adalbert!"

Hearing that deep voice call his name, all the muscles in his body tense in spite of himself.

Lady von Christ Gisela is standing half a step away from him.

"W-what, so it's Sergeant?"

Just a mention, but her actual position isn't sergeant, that's just the way people call her for convenience.

"Here's something for you."

Gisela hands a small red bottle over to Adalbert.

"It's not the antidote, but use it when you want to get rid of Potion I's effects."

"What's this?"

"Sheesh, have you already forgotten? This is for the ex-Shou Shimaron soldier lying over there!"

She moves her empty hand to her mouth, and puts a finger on her lips,

signaling, ‘This is a secret’.

A chill runs down Adalbert’s back suddenly, and he can’t help but take a few steps back.

“The effects of the medicine should start working soon, I’ll protect you two with a blurred gaze.”

“Protect what?”

“Hehehe... Hehehehehehehe...”

Gisela smiles the smile of someone planning something naughty, then backs away quickly.

Her legs barely move at all, and the effect is so terrifying, even the usually domineering muscleman gets goosebumps.

“W-what do you want to protect?”

What kind of medicines are MaChicken Danger Potion I and II, exactly? Adalbert shudders the muscles he was always so proud of, and picks up the manual on the ground.

The white paper is covered with red and black ink handwriting, just looking at it feels ominous. That ice cold script is undoubtedly Anissina’s.

“What... An invention that transcends this generation—MaChicken Danger Potion will open a new world for fowl-haters everywhere...

“The chickens, who just yesterday hated you and sprayed sand at you, will today become your most loyal subordinates! You just have to feed newborn chicks Potion I, and the amylase within will make the chicks take the first person they see to be their father, without question.

“Likewise, by feeding the chicks Potion II, the isoflavones will cause the chicks to consider the other party as their mother, and become ‘useless scum you can boss around’.

“However, if both potions are used together, they will strengthen the chicks’ assistive acids, creating an emotion surpassing chickens and humans, so it is fairly dangerous.

"That is indeed very dangerous... Ah?!"

Adalbert turns around, feeling a passionate gaze on him.

Only to see Crop Pony, who has gotten his upper body free, looking up at him.

His left hand is supporting his body on the ground, his right hand stroking his mustache gracefully, and his lower body wrapped in the wool carpet is stretched completely straight.

His pose is that of a mermaid.

Shocked, Adalbert reads the manual in his hands again.

"Feed Potion I... will take the first person they see to be their father..."

"...Lord Father?"

The question mark at the end of his question causes all the hairs on Adalbet's body to stand on end.

"H-hey, hey, hey! What are you playing at, Maxine? Don't look at me like that! And why the hell are you blushing for! I'm not your father?!"

Looks like Lady von Karbelnikoff invented something useless again.

References

1. ↑ Video tape recording.
2. ↑ Refers to a series of North Korean missiles, such as Taepodong-1 and Taepoding-2, each divided into further stages.
3. ↑ "朱に交われば赤くなる" (Shu ni majiwareba akakunaru), 'If you mix with scarlet, you'll become red'. In English it would be: "He who keeps company with the wolf will learn to howl" or "You cannot keep bad company without being corrupted".

Chapter 7

Chapter 7

In that moment when I fell, it never occurred to me that I was pushed down.

When I drop into the sea headfirst, and my vision turns black, only then do I remember that there was only him behind me then.

Contrasting the turbulent surface, the depths of the sea is so quiet you can't hear anything, and not just because my hearing is numbed.

The dark silent sea feels like space as seen in the movies.

Even if my body is being sucked into the middle of a vortex, my heart remains very peaceful.

The miraculous thing is that I'm not at all afraid of death, just staring at the only hazy green patch in the darkness.

A few seconds ago, I was standing on the deck, thinking, 'Anyone who falls into a sea like this will die for sure.'

Who would have thought that not only didn't I die, I'm also surprisingly calm.

But just then, I feel an intense pain on my right arm, making me scream in spite of myself, I even thought that my arm would be pulled right off.

When I open my mouth, what flows in is seawater instead of air, not only choking my scream back in, but filling my throat and nose with salty water.

Now the pain is coming from my arm, then my throat and deep inside my nose.

Another force opposes the whirlpool, pulling me upwards. My own weight and the powerful force of nature trying to suck me up, all of it piles up on my arm. I pray to an unknown god non-stop, 'I have to hang on', 'Just another second will be enough', 'Cut off this arm and be done with it!'

"...gah..."

When my face rises above the surface, all I hear is rumbling in my ears, and my

body shakes violently with the waves.

I spit out the seawater, desperately opening my mouth like a dying fish, gulping in the air mingled with water spray.

Although I sink slightly several times, but I immediately float back up.

Because a wet rope is tightly wound around my right arm, someone is pulling me up.

“Your Majesty.”

“I hear... you.”

I do hear something, proving that I’m still alive. My eyes and ears work fine.

“Hang in there! Fix the rope on yourself and hold on tightly! Wind it around your waist!”

“Right!”

“I’m pulling you up, are you ready?!”

“Ye...”

I’m about to answer, and as a result seawater into my mouth together with the cough going backwards. Vomiting water unstoppably, I start suspecting how much water I actually drank, my entire lungs feel flooded.

The rope around my waist goes taut, and my body starts rising slowly. In the process, I hit the outer shell of the ship several times, the bruises on my back and waist increasing continuously, but I can’t complain about anything now, as long as I can get back onto the ship safely, that’s already the best thing that could happen in this string of bad luck. Surviving a fall into such a turbulent sea, that’s a miracle in itself.

No, I didn’t fall, I was pushed.

“Your Majesty!”

I’m practically carried over the deck rails. The word ‘Survival’ is spinning in my head to a cheering song, and the font is a very idiotic yellow Times New Roman.

I was on the brink of death just a second ago, so why is my brain reacting like this?

By now even Josak has forgotten his usual cheerful tone, grabbing my chin roughly. I use m=the hand that doesn't hurt to touch his wet orange hair.

"Your Majesty?"

"Calm down, Josak... I'm fine; I can breathe on my own... You being clean-shaven made me think you were a girl, and I was so looking forward to CPR, heh."

"Your Majesty... Young Master, phew~"

He releases a really long breath.

"Thank goodness, I even thought I couldn't save you."

"Don't curse me, relax, I was only in for two, three seconds, and I didn't drink too much water... I didn't even get to see the Dragon Palace."

Some of the crewmen who helped save me grab the rails and the rope, watching me closely, and when the ship starts slanting they quickly regain their balance.

This ship isn't out of danger yet! They knew that I'm from an enemy country, but they still risked themselves to save me.

"Thanks, it's all thanks to you that I..."

Seawater wells up as I cough, choking my throat and nose.

"Ah~ Young Master, just look at yourself, your entire face is covered with snot, your handsome image is all ruined now."

"I was never handsome. Tissue, give me tissue!"

My hand wanders aimlessly looking for a luxury item that can't possibly be found here, but all I see are those light brown eyes in front of me.

Even though the sea is turbulent, the sky is clear as can be.

The sunlight shines on the water, making it sparkle, but those familiar eyes alone remain dark, clouded, even those irises and their silver glow can't be seen.

His expression doesn't reveal anything about his thoughts.

When our gazes meet, his mouth twitches a little, and he lifts a foot, ready to

take a step forth.

"I prefer tissue, because toilet paper will melt and become sticky. But why did I fall? I had Conrad by my side, and I still..."

Although he didn't understand yet, but Josak stiffens upon hearing that name suddenly and of course there's no way he'll pretend this never happened.

From between me and Lord Weller, he says the truth with a husky voice.

Undoubtedly, he is seeking confirmation.

"Was it you?"

The other man doesn't answer, just grips his hands, and pulls back the feet that were stepping forward. His chin is slightly taut, his back against the wall.

"You wanted His Majesty's life? Has your conscience been eaten by the dogs?"

The purposefully lowered voice is the more terrifying for it.

I'm just thinking that Josak's speed, melding three steps into one, is so quick it's worth admiring, but I didn't think that in the next second he would pull out a small silver knife and hold it next to Lord Weller's cheek.

When did he hide that thing on himself? And he can even reach it whenever he wants? He bring his face so close to Lord Weller he can feel the latter's breath, "Lord Weller, you listen carefully! I'm warning you, never get close to His Majesty again. If you don't heed my warning..."

After a long and heavy silence, he says in a voice so quiet I can barely hear it, "...Watch out for your little life!"

I force my wet and heavy body to stand, just in time to see them, standing diagonally in front of me, and their expressions.

But suppressing his anger, Josak actually smiles, that's the beast-like smile I've seen before.

"I never dreamed that I would one day speak like that to you!"

And the smile of an intelligent beast, at that.

"No... It's a misunderstanding, I must have gotten it wrong."

Trying to calm this storm, I grab the spy's sleeve even though I'm soaked to the bone.

The white cloth is even stained by the paint on the deck.

"It's a misunderstanding, Josak. I wasn't pushed, I accidentally slipped and fell."

The waves were beating on the deck, making it wet.

I was walking on the edge, paying attention only to the color of the whirlpool, so it's not surprising that an accident happened.

"Conrad wouldn't possibly want to kill me, right?"

I'm begging you, just nod. It doesn't matter if it's real or fake, just nod.

But Lord Weller doesn't smile, he just shakes his head softly in denial.

"You shouldn't be... so stupid, right?"

Right now I feel all the blood vessels heading to my brain expand. My face is burning, and my vision has gone bright red.

Though the pain burning from my temple is quickly stopped, but my instantaneously escalated heartbeat just can't be slowed.

There's a sentence stuck deep in my throat that I really want to yell out.

And I even feel a ringing in my ears like the sound of metal.

"If so..."

I force out my voice.

I keep telling myself to keep my cool, but it's never succeeded before.

This is also my fatal weakness, all the way until now.

Although the Shou Shimaron crewmen and the shinzoku man we brought up from the bottom of the ship are watching us, I just can't control my own emotions.

"If so you shouldn't have saved me back then!"

Back when I was jumping onto the cargo ship, you shouldn't have caught me, you could have just left me to my own end.

That was all you had to do.

And when we were ambushed by the masked soldiers, if you hadn't stuck yourself out for me in that church, your left arm wouldn't have been cut off, and you wouldn't need to keep getting hurt for me.

All you had to was abandon me.

But why only now...!

"...Damn!"

I grab the cold stone on my chest, snapping the leather rope and tossing it to the ground.

My numb right arm makes a piercing sound when it knocks into something.

The maseki flies in a misshapen curve then bounces, finally falling onto the wet deck.

Even though I used so much force to throw it, it still didn't crack or break.

The stone glimmers on the sunlight.

Perhaps it's psychological, but the color seems whiter than when I wore it on my chest.

We're all waiting for the other to say the next line.

Completely in the dark, the crewmen decide to continue watching, and the shinzoku man we brought out is just scared he'll get caught in the mess.

Surrounded in the middle, the three of us want to make our own escapes, but we limit each other as we wait to see who will break the silence.

Just then, the one that breaks the silence is the creak of a door opening, and Saralegui, wearing a smile completely out of place in this mess.

In the corner of my vision, the shinzoku man shudders violently, even backtracking to the wall.

His golden eyes are wide and round with fear, his filthy forehead drenched in a cold sweat.

Looks like he knows that this boy with the noble aura, is the very mastermind

behind their imprisonment at the bottom of the boat.

But the king doesn't even look at the shivering man.

"Yuuri, the shaking seems to have calmed down a bit, maybe this is something like the eye of the storm..."

Poking his head out from the control room, Saralegui continues to consider the maseki on the ground and my expression.

"What happened?"

Not caring if his long robe will get dirty, he walks up to the stone, picking it up unhesitatingly with his white fingers.

"It dropped?"

Not by itself."

"Then why... So beautiful, it's really very beautiful. I say, Yuuri, do you want to trade with me for it?"

The young king says innocently, a childish desire rising on those petal-like lips.

I desperately swallow the words, 'If you want it, you can have it'.

"I wonder what I have on me... to compare to this beautiful stone?"

As though picking out the snacks for a long trip, Saralegui starts searching his front and pockets.

Lord Weller warns his current employer,

"You can't trade."

"Why? This is proof of our friendship!"

Saralegui replies, tilting his head to a side. Even in such a horrible situation, his beautiful hair can still flow down his face and rest on his shoulders.

The movement he makes, pushing the stray hair back behind his ears with a fair slender finger, is still so graceful.

And then, when he sees his right hand in front of his eyes, his face blossoms into a smile.

"Right, this should do. This is a precious gem that can only be found in Shou

Shimaron, it's the parting gift my mother gave me before we separated when I was a child."

He takes off the light red ring on his ring finger, trying to pass it to me. Instead of calling it light red, it's more towards pale pink.

"I can't accept that, I can't take something so precious."

"It's okay, I want to give it to you."

"Waa~ It's so pretty, let Gurrier touch it, please~?"

The man who stands in between us speaking in a woman's tone, puts both his hands together next to his face.

Perhaps happy that someone understands the value of the ring, Saralegui puts the ring on Josak's large palm.

"...It's really very pretty, too bad it's just too small for Gurrier."

He thoroughly checks out the inside and outside of the ring in record time, trying to determine if there are any traps on it.

I can't help but admire him again, as an excellent soldier.

Saralegui doesn't notice the way the adult world thinks.

Those beautiful fingers of his that never lifted anything heavy, touches my right hand gently.

Those nails filed until they looked like sakura shells hold the tiny circlet, and I notice that they're all the same color.

There seem to be some words engraved on the inside of the ring, but they're not clear because the writing is too thin, and the outside of the ring is engraved with twining rose vines and quite a number of suns.

He takes my calloused finger, trying to put the pink ring on it.

"Ouch!"

The ring gets caught on my ring finger joint, breaking the skin and causing me pain.

A king's ring won't fit these rough hands used for plying baseball at all. The

Shou Shimaron king hmphs mischievously, "...Looks like you can only wear it on the pinky. After all unlike me, your hands look a lot stronger and braver."

"There's no such thing!"

If I really was a brave man, I wouldn't have been scared witless upon falling into the sea.

"Are you shivering, Yuuri?"

Saralegui hugs me suddenly, he seems to be fonder of skin contact than his appearance would suggest.

And yet, since I'll start crying if I have to open my mouth again, his actions are exactly what I need.

"Poor thing! You must be so cold, you should get into the room for warmth now."

That's what I want to do, right now I'd rather hide under the cover immediately. I wish to take a hot soak and wash off the seawater on my body, then immediately lie on the soft bed and sleep all I want.

My hair, now dry, keeps tickling my nose, even I know that I'm dead tired now.

But I desperately resist the aching in my sore muscles, and leave Saralegui's embrace.

"I can't yet, I found someone with navigation experience among the shinzoku in the bottom of the boat, and he even has experience crossing this part of the sea."

"You released the slaves?!"

"No, Sara. He's not a slave, but an experienced crewman. He can help steer, y'know! So I have to stay by his side and watch him, after all I have a responsibility to look after him."

Because I was the one who took him away from his companions, and brought him to a place where people looked at him as a slave.

So I have a responsibility to look after him.

"Regarding that matter, I also..."

"Didn't I tell you not to get close?"

The loyal spy in the long-sleeved apron, holds the tip of a knife at Lord Weller's throat when the latter tries to approach us.

"Don't, Josak! He..."

For some reason, Saralegui is waiting for me to finish that sentence with bated breath, only my throat hurts as though it's swollen.

"That person' is the Shou Shimaron king's escort, and the ambassador from Dai Shimaron. I do not wish to create tension between countries over such a trivial matter."

My spy nods lightly, and withdraws his sword unhesitatingly, then turns around to ask me what I plan to do next.

"Although we've entered a temporary respite, but we're not out of the danger zone yet. Telling me to wait in the cabin and wait for it patiently... That's impossible~"

He shrugs his shoulders in surprise.

"I know, I know. Please bring my clothes and a woolen blanket, we'll coop up in the control room together, and carefully watch him steer the ship."

"I'm staying in the cabin."

Maybe feeling a little cold, Saralegui rubs his hands and shivers.

"I've had enough of being drenched by seawater, I'm going back to the room and hugging a pillow to prevent any more damage to my body. I'll get someone to serve you some hot drinks, Yuuri. Don't push yourself too hard."

Josak gives Saralegui an appreciative look, because he can use this as an excuse to chase away Lord Weller.

Different babysitters have to stay by the children they're in charge of.

My right arm supporting my weight is a little painful, though.

Maybe I strained a tendon, everything from the nerves in the muscles outside to the joints on my pinky is numb.

"My arm hurts, if only Wolfram or Gisela were here now~"

"Can't you heal it yourself? Young Master, isn't your maryoku really strong?"

"I heard it was dangerous to use maryoku on human lands, and we're approaching the country of the shinzoku no less! Murata and Wolf keep telling me again and again 'don't push yourself', I'm sick and tired of hearing it."

"Is that so~ Well, that's inconvenient, huh~"

To test exactly how painful it is, I use my thumb and pointer to rub my arm a few times, and then force myself slightly to sway back and forth, left and right, if I'm just a bit off controlling the force used, an intense pain will attack me immediately.

The agonizing pain puts tears in my eyes, but I don't tell anyone about it.

Still, if it can move, then that means it's not a sprain. I'm actually quite lucky, I just need a muscle pain plaster and some bandages for this degree of pain.

"You won't cry, huh."

"Me, cry?! I won't cry over a little bit of pain!"

"Then that's good. Though since half of that was my fault, let me lick it a little!"

"No thanks! I'm not a puppy, it won't get better even if you do lick it."

Just imagining the spy who was crossdressing for a mission sticking out his red tongue, makes me smile bitterly.

Meanwhile, Josak closes the control room door with his back, making the room feel warmer.

"I wonder if there are painkillers on board?"

"Come on~ I'm an athlete, y'know! A baseball boy! A little injury like this is nothing to me. My body can take a lot of wear to begin with, just leave it and it'll naturally get better. Right, let's get ready to ask that shinzoku."

I spread open the nautical map directly on the wet floorboards, and stare at it with the sailors.

"Remember to signal with your hands!"

This pain probably can't be suppressed with any kind of medication, I know

that better than anyone.

Short story - His Majesty the Maou's Elegant Day

His Majesty the Maou's Elegant Day

優雅な一日
HIS MAOU'S ELEGANT DAY



Greta is back three days earlier than expected.

A little later that afternoon, I receive the report saying that Greta has returned to the country, and so I hurry up the stairs connecting the halls, taking two steps at once in a mad dash.

The girl who had for some reasons become my daughter, isn't only the remaining member of a lost royal family, she is also Shin Makoku's princess.

To ensure her education is completely impartial to both human and mazoku sides, she is currently studying in our ally country, Cavalcade.

Though we exchange letters regularly via pigeon mail, but it's really been a while since we last met.

Lord Weller, who usually accompanies me when I jog, even laughs and tells me to calm down.

"Your Majesty, there's no need to hurry so, it's not like she's not leaving immediately."

"Even so, I still want to meet her a second earlier! Conrad, when you have kids of your own someday, you'll know how I feel."

"I think even a bachelor will understand those feelings."

※ ※ ※ ※ ※

Sliding past the slippery stone corridor in one movement, I'm now standing in front of the ornamental door

"Your Majesty, you're ba..."

Before the soldier can even complete the word, I push past the door and rush into the living hall where my beloved daughter awaits.

"Greta!"

"Yuuri!"

That face with reddish-brown hair and little wavy curls, those handsome red-brown brows, and suntanned olive skin, blooms into a smile as she turns around to look at me.

“Welcome home, Gre... Uh...”

I’m ready to rush over to my beloved daughter, but I stop in pure animal instinct.

There’s something here, there’s an unknown life form in the house.

Bzzz! Boom!

My premonition is right, because a large black object flies over my head at a relatively fast speed.

I even feel a gust of wind over my head.

“W-what is that?!”

Bzzz! Boom!

My ears are filled with sound and impact of fastball whooshing past me.

The enemy flies everywhere at top speed, but the breakneck speed also causes it to knock into the living hall walls.

“Greta are you okay...”

“I’m fine, Yuuri.”

Smiling broadly, the girl runs over to me, her arms stretched straight to hug me tightly.

Only her head knocks into my temple, the pain making me nearly forget to breathe.

Bzzz! Boom! Boomboom! Bzzz!

As father and daughter are enjoying our piece of paradise, the black object continues to whiz along, not learning its lesson and still ramming desperately at the wall.

“Your Majesty, Your Majesty--!”

I look towards the source of the voice, only to see the beautiful Royal Instructor and his subordinates hiding behind the throne deep in the room.

That familiar bald head is glittering in the afternoon sunlight.

“What’s up? Günter.”

"It's dangerous, Your Majesty! Please don't mind us, and leave this room immediately!"

"That's right, Your Majesty! That guy is really dangerous! That guy is really dangerous!"

Lord von Christ Günter and his merry men who he likes a lot for some reason, are all desperately warning me with expressions of dread.

"Yuuri, listen to me, Günter and Dakaskos are exaggerating. I already said it isn't dangerous at all."

Just as I'm pondering over who to believe, the black object whizzes past my head at an incredible speed again. It hits the ceiling above, and even bounces back down.

"Ah, so it's a rare insect."

One of the last to enter, Conrad is the calmest. He pushes me and Greta from behind, making us squat down.

"Lie low, right now it's only spinning around the ceiling."

"Spinning? Waa--! It's flying with a buzz! W-w-what is that thing? What weird thing ambushed Greta?!"

"You misunderstood, Yuuri! I wasn't ambushed, that's a friend I made on the way here!"

"A friend? You made friends with a rare insect?"

Since Conrad already called it a 'rare insect', then something that makes a disgusting noise and flies all over the place should probably be an insect.

"Mn! It's the reason I could get back three days earlier!"

"Greta, you didn't let that thing carry you back, did you?!"

The girl's large eyes narrow in humor.

"Don't be silly, Yuuri, human can't fly in the air. It's nothing like what you imagined, it was actually a large flock of buzzing cicadas that helped tow our boat. The speed really was incredible, it was no different than surfing the waves!"

Buzzing cicadas?

That's a cicada? You say that huge thing is a cicada?

Just then, Conrad lets out an admiring sigh that doesn't fit the moment at all.

"That's right, that's a legendary creature. Your Majesty, if that really is a buzzing cicada, then it should have made that once-in-six-hundred-years voyage across the sea to get here. Greta, where did you hear the name of this cicada from?"

"From the insect-loving captain, he was even crying tears of joy because he got the rare buzzing cicada's leg hairs."

"Leg... hairs..."

Right then, due to the extreme impact of crashing into a wall, the legendary animal makes a dry 'pasha' noise and falls onto the ground.

It's really huge, way taller than I am.

It's lying on the ground in an ugly belly-up position, frantically moving its six hairy legs, desperately trying to get back up.

To someone like me who was born on Earth, grew up in Japan, and lives in Saitama district, it doesn't look like a cicada however I look at it...

"Wait! This shouldn't be a cicada, it's the thing that starts with 'cockro-', isn't it?! Isn't this the one that always shows up in kitchens, the insect that I hate the most and starts with 'cockro-'?!"

In that instant I'm covered in goosebumps from head to toe.

Just looking at that shiny body, the brown wings, and the long feelers...

"Of course not, Yuuri, no matter how you look at it it's a cicada!"

"That's right, Your Majesty, it's obviously a cicada!"

Really?!

"Is the buzzing cicada you're talking about that rare insect that hibernates in the soil for seven days, lives on the surface, and has a very strong life force?"

"That's what the insect-loving captain said too... Hey!"

"Ah, Greta, don't touch it with your hands!"

How did this happen? My adorable daughter actually touched a cockro-- No, a rare cicada's stomach with her hands, and even flipped it over.

"Like this is OK already, relax—Greta used to be a cicada in my past life too."

"Please, Greta! When someone starts talking about their past life, they're done for!"

"Yuuri, look, they really listen to me! Señor, sit, shake hands! Hey, why aren't you shaking hands?"

Maybe the giant cock... cicada isn't in a very good mood, so it refuses to obey Greta.

But regardless of whether it's a cicada or a horned beetle without horns, forcing a giant insect to shake hands is too much, isn't it? And yet the girl continues to repeat the simple order patiently.

Right now, in the center of the living hall, there's the persistent scene of a cicada staring down Greta.

Although it seems to be two meters long, it does seem to be a very safe insect.

Even the adults hiding and shivering behind the throne start approaching the child and insect cautiously.

I heave a sigh of relief and then throw my head back.

As a result, right in my field of vision when I look up, meaning that corner of the ceiling that people tend to hate, there's something exactly the same as the thing just now.

"Waleh!"

It's a second bug.

"T-twin cicadas?"

"They're not twins, Yuuri. That one is Señorita, Señor's wife, they're really loving too~ Though both are male."

"Both male?!"

"Yup, that's right. Just like my fathers, right?"

Although I don't want to elaborate on what she means by 'fathers', but she should mean me and Lord von Bielefeld Wolfram, right?

I just never thought that, in my beloved daughter's eyes, my position is at the same level as a rare insect, Papa feels so bad he wants to cry~

"I'm great friends with Señorita and Señor, y'know. Right, Señor? Oh yeah, you guys should say hi to Yuuri too!"

"Chiuuii—n!"

"Waa!"

The insect suddenly makes a painful and piercing supersonic wave. It's the dentist, that's the sound of the teeth-grinding equipment you only find at the dentist's!

"He says he's glad to meet you."

"I get it, I get it! Please spare me!"

Even if that really was a sound of happiness, it still has a great destructive force against Japanese people.

Even though it's a rare opportunity, but I am really unable to be good friends with rare insects.

On another note, since when did my daughter become a master at controlling cicadas? Though now isn't the time to worry about such minor details.

Although I'm not married yet, but since I've made it my goal to be a good father, I am now faced with something that requires an immediate decision.

When children make friends with animals, it's easy to guess what they will say next, and Greta is no exception.

"Yuuri~ Can I keep Mr and Señorita?"

Large red-brown eyes sparkling, Greta tilts her neck and asks.

"Can I, please~?"

When faced with such an adorable plea, surely no father can find it in him to

say no.

Or, maybe there is a father like that, but for a sixteen-year-old, unpopular with the ladies, single father, that is mission impossible. “Ahh—Fine! But you can only keep them in the courtyard, and you can’t ever let them onto your bed, got it?”

“Thanks—Yuuri I love you the most!”

Greta wraps her suntanned arms around my neck, her entire body suspending in mid-air.

From her body hugging mine so tightly, there’s a faint smell of seawater.

“Alright, Greta, I heard you!”

Looks like this child learned something else besides history and politics with Mr Hiscliff in Cavalcade.

“I’m so happy, this is great! Señor, Señorita, hurry up and thank Yuuri!”

“Chiuuii—n!”

“Waa~ That’s enough, dentist! There’s no need to thank me anymore, really, there’s no need!” Quick, let them leave the room! Let them fly freely in the sky!”

“Mn!”

But the cicada couple keeps on hesitating and lingering, completely refusing to obey orders.

They’re just insects, but they act spoiled.

“What’s the matter... Ah, maybe they’re hungry.”

“If so, there’s all the more reason for them to look for food outside! Don’t cicadas feed on tree sap? So they should go to the forest and find delicious trees!”

Lord Weller quietly heaves a somewhat meaningful sigh, he seems to know some unspeakable truth.

“This may not be anything interesting, but...”

“Just say it, whatever it is, just spill it!”

“A rare insect’s diet is a bit more unique compared to normal cicadas.”

"What do you mean by unique?"

Conrad uses his thick fingers to rub Greta's hair as he says,

"They suck blood, not sap."

Blood!"

That's not even 'Oh~ the sweet liquid that flows out from the butts of the pests on the canola flowers'!

"...In other words, they're terrifying blood-sucking insects?"

This time Señorita makes a 'Chiuuiin!' sound with a questioning tone, this seems to be the way they show affection.

"But it doesn't have to be human blood specifically, and from what I heard, they only need a minimal amount of blood, so we cannot simply conclude that they are pests."

Something occurs to me suddenly, and I grab Greta's shoulders frantically,

"Greta, don't tell me they've already sucked your blood on the way here, and now your thoughts are under their control?!"

"No, they didn't suck Greta's blood, the insect-loving captain mentioned this before too. He said that buzzing cicadas are chivalrous by nature, so they never feed from a creature smaller than them. Mr Captain let them suck his blood out of respect, but it really was only a little. Just a little blood can sustain them for three, four days, and they even repaid the favor by towing the ship really fast."

"I see, so it took a lot of energy."

"Now isn't the time to admire them, Conrad."

And the situation is really dire, too.

The chivalrous rare insect couple who allegedly never feed from anything smaller than them, are now busily swiveling their heads to look around them, seemingly having locked onto their target.

They've locked onto the odd master-servant combination of the beautiful man with shiny pretty long hair, and the cowardly commoner with his shiny scalp, and proceed to walk slowly towards them.

“Eeek--!”

Günter and Dakaskos let out screams that embarrass even the onlookers, and are even being forced slowly to the sides.

“Just a tiny bit of blood, Günter! Just a little bit! It’s like being pricked by a needle... probably.”

“E-e-e-even so, Your Majesty! I didn’t live to this day only to supply blood to this kind of cicada... Uyaaaa!”

“Ah, if we’re pricked by that kind of tube! Ahh, save me! Blin!”

Farewell, I thank you two from the bottom of my heart. Lord von Christ Günter, Lilit Latchie Etcetera Dakaskos.

We will never forget your brave sacrifice.

Conrad and I watch the two men pinned onto the ground by the passionate giant cicadas, and chat in calm tones.

“They are cicadas, after all. Only cicadas have tubes like that, not cockroaches.”

“Let’s put that aside for now, Your Majesty. Do you want to organize a party to welcome Greta home tonight?”

“Mn, let’s do that, and it’ll be enough to invite just a few close friends. Also, don’t call me Your Majesty! Don’t forget that you were the one who gave me my name.”

“Sorry, Yuuri, I just can’t get rid of that habit.”

And then Greta hugs my waist, lifting her head and looking at me with those wide innocent eyes,

“Yuuri, tell me, do you like them? Do you like Señor and the others? Does this help your rare animal collection?”

“Rare animal collection?!”

Why would I collect something like that?

We only planned to invite a few familiar friends and family to Greta’s coming-home party, but under an unusually energetic Günter’s planning, it became a

rather large-scale banquet.

“You look lively, Günter.”

“That’s right, Your Majesty! It’s unbelievable, right now I’m mentally, spiritually and emotionally in top form. There’s no way to describe it, as though there’s some force welling up from deep within my body.”

Günter with his beautiful face flushed red, grips his fists and says, panting non-stop in between, as though he’d gulped down an entire Red Bull in one go.

“Ha--! My spirit has been released from all manners of obstructions, ha--! I feel like a brand new person, ha! Come to think of it, it must have been because of the rare insects’ feeding, allowing me to decisively abandon all the conservative views tying me down, ha---!”

“I think you abandoned a lot of things a long time ago.”

As for my situation, I’m tied down as it is dealing with the people taking this opportunity to ask for a meeting or offer gifts, and at the end I couldn’t find time to stay with my most important Greta.

By the time the banquet finally ends, it’s already late in the night, long past a good child’s bedtime, and also a baseball boy’s bedtime.

Taking off her boots, Greta makes a noise of dissatisfaction as she walks on the ice-cold floorboards barefooted.

Perhaps because she wears higher heels like an adult, the girl’s soles are red and swollen.



“Ehh—Why can’t I sleep with Yuuri?”

Looking at her upset expression, I can’t help but hesitate at her question.

But Greta’s already ten-years-old, and even though I live in a Japanese townhouse, otherwise known as a ‘Little Rabbit House’, I’ve been sleeping alone since I started elementary school, so I need to train her to sleep alone in her room as well.

Sobbbb—It hurts to be apart from my kid~

It's just like what they say, you only learn to appreciate your parents when you have kids of your own. Greta frowns her handsome brows, saying,

"And I thought that since Wolf isn't around today, I can have the spot beside Yuuri all to myself."

"But Greta, unmarried young ladies should always sleep alone, y'know!"

"Then Greta will marry Papa now!"

"Father and daughter cannot get married."

I think to myself,

'How many times will I get to hear such touching words?'

And then I wipe away my tears inwardly. In that sense, I really am like a dad.

"How—Bo—ring—And I even wanted to teach you Mr Shiny's special one-of-a-kind secret relaxing massage!"

"O-one-of-a-kind secret?"

To be honest I kinda want to try, but I'm forced to pass tonight.

Just then, Miss Anissina walks past us, with a few drunkards tied up and tossed over her shoulders.

As for what she plans to do with those men, that seems to a secret we must never ask about.

"Aiya! Your Majesty, look at you, all panicked and flustered. If it's a problem my magical inventions can fix, I'm more than eager to help. Please do not misunderstand, my goal isn't to ask for a higher budget, I simply wish you can draw a description of before and after use, as well as answer a survey on your thoughts."

She suddenly tosses her high dark red ponytail, then roughly throws down her drunk luggage.

"Then, Greta, to ensure that you won't feel lonely tonight, please use this masterpiece of mine."

I'm not sure if it was majutsu or really a magical invention, but Lady von Karbelnikoff Anissina pulls out half a dozen pillows from goodness knows where.

“This is called ‘Magical Invention Pillow Army’s I Wanna Sleep In Your Arms’! Right, which do you want? The Red Sleep Troop for that burning hot sense of justice and a dead sleep, the Blue Sleep Troop for a cool and handsome guy to sing you a lullaby, the Green Sleep Troop with herbal fragrances for a good night’s rest, the Yellow Sleep Troop that guarantees you will say ‘I can’t eat in anymore’ in your sleep, and the adult-only pillow that ensures a naughty dream —the Pink Sleep Troop. And the ultimate one is this, the Silver Sleep Troop that lets you relive happy memories. By the way, although the all the outside wrappers are dirt-yellow, but they’re all made of sandbear bamboo leaves that allegedly emit electrons.”

“Amazing! So you’re using the power of magical inventions to increase sleep quality?”

“There’s also the Spoiler Pillow for finding out the ending to a story you haven’t finished watching, and the Repentance Pillow that creates an intense discomfort that will ensure the user never gets any sleep. Right, Greta, choose a magical invention pillow that you like.”

“Hmm, Greta wants...”

These pile of streamlined pillows that the world has never seen the likes of before, seems to have chased away all the child’s weariness.

“It’s best not to choose the pink one, that one suits your father better, everything other than that is okay.”

Finally Greta takes the long green pillow, then mischievously leaves a goodnight kiss on my cheek before leaving my bedroom.

Left behind, we look at the pile of sleeping apparatus with no idea what to do next.

Perhaps following my gaze, Conrad silently says by my ear,

“You’ve been staring at the pink pillow since just now... Do you want to try?”

“Of course, for a guy without any luck with the ladies, that’s the basic entertainment. It’s the same as wanting to sneak a peek at the paid channels on hotel TVs.”

The half of Lord Weller's face I see has no hint of displeasure, just the expression of a kindred soul.

"Since you sound so determined, then I won't stop you, go ahead and take it. Your Majesty is in the middle of puberty, and you should learn how to take responsibility for your own actions."

"But Günter is looking over here with a scary glare."

"...I see."

He touches his chin with his thumb and pointer, thinking for a moment, then he picks up the pink pillow.

And Günter says with an expression of surprise,

"Conrad, you want to take the pink pillow?"

"Your surprise makes me feel rather uneasy now, but after all I am a lonely bachelor. Or do you want to use this pillow? If so, you can have it."

"N-no, I don't need it! How could I do something so shameless! Besides I'm the kind of person who can't sleep at all if I change pillows!"

"You're really sensitive, huh! Then here, Your Majesty, take this one, occasionally indulging in memories of the past isn't a bad idea."

Conrad hands over the silver pillow, but if it's not the pink one, everything else is the same to me, so he tells the disappointed me in a small voice,

"We'll exchange later."

"Then I'll give the remaining red and blue ones to Lord von Voltaire to try then. Which magical invention pillow will triumph in the end? What torture...I mean. what kind of sleep will Gwen endure this time? It's so intriguing."

So she doesn't plan on trying out any one of the pillows herself, relying on everyone else to collect data.

Anissina always looks so happy, and those sky blue eyes shine with a gleam of danger different from knowledge and curiosity even this late at night.

Poor Gwen, all I can do is wish him a happy and fulfilling life.

"That's great~ The substitute batter in the training match hits a high ball out of

the park, it's out of the park..."

Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to have an option to choose the dream settings.

Normally, Covenant Castle's morning activities start really late. After Lord Weller and I complete our daily jog, only then will everyone else in the castle start their activities.

The people in the kitchens and army camps would naturally get busy with their own duties, but in truth the ones in charge of the castle's operation, Lord von Christ and Lord von Voltaire, almost always use flexible working times.

But today is an exception.

Before dawn even breaks, Conrad wakes me up, saying there's a special agenda today.

"Did you have nice dreams?"

"Mn... I kept dreaming that I was swimming with a lot of scary male maidmers... Does that count as a happy experience from my past?"

"Childhood memories tend to be very blurry. I'm sorry we couldn't exchange, because by the time I got back to the room you were already sound asleep."

I sit on the bed and stretch hard.

Maybe because I slept all curled up, the muscles around my spine feel taut.

"Exactly! That awkward banquet wore me out so much, so I accidentally fell dead asleep within three seconds. I didn't even notice that Wolf came back early in the morning."

Lord von Bielefeld who had only returned early on the second day, yawns hugely next to me.

"Really~ Your pretty boy image is all ruined."

"Shah yaw twap (Shut your trap)!"



"Although the two of you just woke up, and you're not completely clear-headed yet, I must ask you to finish your breakfast as quickly as possible. Anyway, we have to finish this before Greta wakes up. Wolfram, are you eating breakfast?"

Conrad waves the servant in without waiting for an answer. The familiar servant enters quietly, pushing a silver breakfast cart,

"You're eating, right, Wolf? If you don't eat breakfast you won't grow taller. Oh, yeah, you're already eighty-two, you probably won't grow anymore anyway."

"I'm fine with just tea, I drank a bit too much last night."

Despite being a blonde-haired green-eyed pretty boy, he actually drank until he was hung over. After hearing him say that, I notice that his face is a little swollen too, and maybe it's psychological, but it looks like his skin is also a little oily.

"Oh, yeah, you actually left halfway through the event yesterday, where did you go... Ah, sorry, I accidentally intruded into your privacy there. Truth is I didn't mean to ask you about your love life."

Besides, in a moment you'll be boasting about it until even the dog is tired of it.

"What love life? Of course not, I had just had an old acquaintance come visit. Don't think that I'm frivolous like you!"

"Yes yes yes, sorry."

I try an egg dish from the plates on the food trolley.

"But still—I'm slightly a bit relieved now."

"Relieved?"

"To know that you have friends of your own age too. Ah, even if it's a different age group, that's fine too! Because you look so young yet you're cooped up in the castle all the time, so I was worried that maybe you didn't have friends. You should be the one to initialize old boys gatherings sometimes, and meet up with your friends from your student days."

"Thanks for being a busybody!"

He just leaves the hot red tea he took on the tabletop on the bed, taking not even a sip.

The pretty boy who seems to have low blood pressure hides back into the covers.

Looks like he plans to sleep until the afternoon.

"Hey, that's really unhealthy, how could he have drank until he can't even get out of bed."

Seeing his younger brother look so messed-up, Conrad smiles exasperatedly.

"There's no choice, looks like Lord von Bielefeld is on sick leave today."

"What did you mean by special agenda? What are our plans exactly?"

Carrying my steaming hot breakfast, I move to the living hall, buttoning up my familiar student uniform with one hand, and getting ready for a hard day's work.

"Allow me to explain about the drill!"

The tall man completely HIGH so early in the morning, walks past the large open doors fabulously. It's Lord von Christ, tossing his long pale grey hair.

"G-Günter. Why are you so spirited today?"

"Of course! Good morning, Your Majesty. The weather today is sunny as usual, the southwest breeze makes the temperature exactly the same as it was in previous years, so overall it's a very suitable day for an assassination drill."

"Assassination drill?!"

Rows of black-clothed ninjas immediately float into my mind. 'General, your petty life is mine!' And shuriken, smoke bombs, suiton no jutsu^[1], nyanmage, Nikko Edomura. Is it Nikko? Or is it Edo? Is it a zoo? Or a village?^[2] Tell me properly!

And now, y-you want m-me to do that sort of thing?!

"T-this country requires that their king must personally participate in assassination missions? N-no way, assassination isn't a good thing. Although it definitely isn't a good thing, but if the circumstances force for it... Eh—maybe it's safer to follow Golgo^[3]? You guys know that I'm not strong enough to bat fatal home-runs, and I don't have shoulders hard enough to block a runner's head either."

"T-that's too much, Your Majesty!"

The super beautiful man's brows slant downwards exaggeratedly, and he even shakes his head with a nervous force, that immaculately combed long hair of his

floating left and right with it.

“We would never let Your Majesty the Maou personally take action. This is for His Majesty’s personal safety, a drill to strengthen the people’s reaction in the face of emergency.”

“Ahh, so that’s what it was! So you’re not telling me to practice killing other people, you want me to practice how not be killed by others. Ahh—That’s great, I thought I’d be forced to hold a rifle with a red laser point, and then to draw my eyebrows real thick^[3]. ”

“This is a duty all generations of Maou have diligently performed every year... Except for Her Majesty the Former Maou Cheri.”

“Why was Lady Cheri the only exception?”

“About that...”

Günter looks into the distance with a sorrowful gaze, as though reliving some bitter memories.

“Because there is no one in this world who can possibly hurt Lady Cheri. Not only that, even if a hundred powerful soldiers were sent after her, they still wouldn’t be able to hurt a hair on her head.”

“So strong, is she really that amazing?”

He unknowingly heaves another long and meaningful sigh.

“More than that. Any man who approaches her with the intent to kill, will always be completely bedazzled by her and suffer the consequences...”

“Wait a sec, Günter, if you say it like that then it means something else altogether. You mean Lady Cheri has had to face plenty of assassination attempts?”

And I thought Shin Makoku’s security was really good, who knew it’s not peaceful at all.

“I understand what you mean. It’s because I’m a novice that’s easy to assassinate, so I have to rely on anti-assassination drills to learn how to deal with danger?”

"You misunderstand, Your Majesty! Günter never thought of you as some novice! Your Majesty is like... Right, if you want me to describe it, you're like a hundred lilies 'no'dding in the valley wind, or a saint full of wisdom and 'vi'sion, or a single blossom blooming in the dry desert crevi'ce'[\[4\]](#)."

"—Rather than listening to your convoluted logic, I'd rather you tell me directly that I'm a novice."

"Anyway, we have to complete this task before Greta wakes up."

Conrad pours steaming hot tea into a cup as he continues,

"If that child hears the word 'assassination', I fear it will hit her hard. At first we had planned to do this before she returned, but we didn't expect her to arrive early with the rare insects' help."

"—That's right."

This reminds me of my exciting first encounter with Greta.

Although she had no other choice, the truth remains that that child held a knife and tried to take my life.

And just because the past cannot be changed, she herself is very depressed about it.

A ten-year-old girl has to fight desperately against her past mistakes.

"I don't want Greta to be tortured any further. All right, I'll finish eating immediately, let's start as soon as possible."

I bite into the fragrant bread fresh out of the oven, looks like there's no time to savor my food today.

The drill in the city... is like going into a haunted houses, learning how to keep calm even as soldiers jump out from behind the corners of the streets, dressed as monsters, and then... Having successfully passed this stage, we still have to lead our companions away from the streets, and after that it's time to practice during a procession through the city square.

"...There's no one on the streets, huh."

The stone white and cream streets, usually teeming with people, are currently

surprisingly silent.

"Well, of course. For this assassination drill, we have long since notified all of the city's inhabitants that before twelve, this area is an off limit 'Pedestrian Hell'[\[5\]](#)."

"Pedestrian Hell... If we conduct a drill in a set piece like this, it won't have much effect when dealing with the actual situation..."

"Usually this time in the morning is when the market and the shopping street is the most crowded, otherwise known as the business golden period."

"Waa, goodness! Actually there's absolutely no need to ask all the citizens to cooperate with a drill about something that may or may not happen."

"But all the people of Shin Makoku are Your Majesty's servants, as long as it's beneficial to Your Majesty, they should close their shops and cooperate fully, waiting in their houses with bated breath and praying that the drill goes smoothly."

"Günter, listen to me! I don't want to be hated by the people due to something like this..."

Just when we're turning around the corner of a shop with a sign saying 'Cow AND Frog'—

"Archers, get ready--!"

"Waa!"

Lord von Christ's beautiful face hardens, and he issues orders with his clear melodic voice.

This is coming from somewhere that can be considered the roofs, and suddenly a group of archers we couldn't even see a second earlier stand up. Terrified, I hold my head and squat down, afraid of getting hit.

But the cream of the crop chosen from within the borders of Shin Makoku, aren't aiming at us, but the wooden boards that suddenly popped up in the corners of every house.

There are ten of them altogether, and different people are drawn onto each one.

Not only are they colored, each is drawn to the character's size. There's the vendor selling bananas, an old man with a crystal ball, a housewife with a bunch of stuff in her arms.

Hmm? A housewife?"

"What is this! You accidentally shot a missus going shopping?! Really, that's horrible. How could you harm the innocent citizens?"

Lord von Christ puts his arms on his hips, laughing heartily,

"Your Majesty, please examine the things in that woman's hand carefully."

"Eh?"

I look closely at the woman painted onto the board. She looks like an extremely normal housewife, even holding a bag full of groceries. There's even a baguette poking out by about 15 centimeters.

"Is there anything especially weird..."

"Please examine that baguette. It may look like bread, but it is in fact the sheath of a sword! Why would a young housewife doing groceries hide a weapon such as a long sword? Because that woman is an enemy assassin disguised as a housewife, thankfully our excellent national security saw through her ruse."

"Eh, but that looks a lot like a normal bread. Even if it is a sword, maybe her husband just asked her to collect it from the blacksmith's, if so, what should we do? That's the same as a wife helping her husband collect his suit from the dryers!"

"I-I understand, but that is impossible."

Lord von Christ still pretends to be calm, flipping the two-faced board over and reading the words on the back.

"Evil Association Female Employee Number Three, codenamed 'Pure Love Young Missus'. Although she looks cute, her heart is cold and cruel. However hard the mission, she can calmly carry out her orders, without a shred of personal emotion. Her weapon is the throwing knife hidden on her thigh. The thing sticking out from the bag may look like a sword, but it is actually bread... Phew~ Thank goodness, she really is the enemy."

"So that really is a baguette! By the way, are all these human-shaped pop-up boards so detailed?!"

"But of course, Your Majesty. Because these are all the masterpieces all the human-shaped pop-up board specialists spent an entire year creating. Also, this one is codename 'Working Vendor', and that's 'Ludicrous Fortuneteller', and the one fallen over there is the coordinator, 'Cat-Loving Khrushchev'^[6]."

"Khru... so he likes cats? Wait, there isn't a need to create such detailed human-shaped pop-up boards, is there?"

I suddenly feel sympathy for the boards that had been shot through and fell behind shop corners and barrels. Why do I care so much about something so petty?

Lord von Christ tilts his face skywards, saying proudly,

"Why do you think about the hundred per cent hit rate, Your Majesty? Are you satisfied with our national security's performance... Mmph!"

Suddenly there's the sound of splattering mud, and something dirties Günter's beautiful hair.

Turns out a bird just gliding over dropped a 'bomb' onto his head, the sticky white-and-green fluid oozing down his forehead.



The previously silent Conrad shrugs and says,

"Looks like we're not prepared to face aerial attacks."

"Don't tease Günter like that, Conrad, that's mean. If it was just a few centimeters off... See, it might have gotten me, now Günter's more or less taken the poop hit for me."

"...That's right."

"Ah?"

The two of us can't really hear what the Education Minister is saying with his head bowed, so we ask in unison. Lord von Christ Günter's clenched fist is shaking.

When he raises his solemn face, his eyebrows are arched high, his mouth pressed tightly shut in anger, his violet eyes burning with an almost visible blue-white flame.

"That bird... That bird is a terrorist aiming for His Majesty! What are you standing around for? Get that impudent bird for me at once! And after you catch it use a pan and make a fried bird feast!"

"Wait a sec, wait a sec, Günter! That's too much! Poop can't kill anyone, bird poop can't kill me!"

"Your Majesty, how can you be okay with this! It is obviously a hateful assassin sent by the enemy to disrupt and destroy our country. I heard that there are people in the West who can chant and make birds sing songs, as easily as they would control their own limbs."

"Are you talking about the Birdman Rally [7]?"

"No, I'm not too sure what they're called... Anyway, someone, get that bird, g-get it now, now!"

Looks to me like he's blown his top, this way even I can't handle him. Shrugging 'he's hopeless', Conrad tells the soldiers waiting with bated breath,

"Lord von Christ has lost his mind, call the supervising officer or Gisela over."

He has a supervising officer? But before the person in charge arrives, something even bigger happens on the streets of the drill. In this Pedestrian Hell where even an ant can't get it, and in front of the king protected by the elite national security team, there appears a boy considerably younger than me.

"Your Majesty..."

"H-how did you get in..."

And he's holding a large sword in his hands.

Although it's sheathed, you can more or less see its length and weight.

That's not a weapon a normal child can wield.

"There's a villain--! I'll vanquish you!"

"Wait a sec! Calm down, Günter—"

Conrad avoids the agitated Education Minister, scrutinizing the other person's face.

"I wondered who it was, you're the blacksmith Zikode's youngest son, right? I remember he comes in and out of the city to repair farming and kitchen equipment. What's your name? Why are you holding such a large sword?"

The boy who looks to be about twelve, looks around uneasily with his grey eyes as he says,

"I'm called Helio. Um, um, this is... This is the sword my father made for the king. He said he must give it to His Majesty the Maou..."

"Then Helio, why didn't Zikode bring it into the city himself? Can't he just come into the city on the day we accept gifts and ask to meet the king? And there was a notice put up since yesterday, that because of today's drill, this place is a 'Pedestrian Hell' that no one can pass."

The boy's voice is shaking so much it's hard not to feel sorry for him, but we still have to hear him explain clearly first.

"I know that, of course I do. But no matter what, I want to bring this most amazing sword to His Majesty while my father still lives, because this is his greatest dream."

"While he lives... What does that mean?"

He falls to his knees, his tiny body bowing to me non-stop after I interrupted, pleading,

I'm begging you, Your Majesty, this is my father's dream ever since he took over the family business and started making farming equipment. He said just once is okay, but he must give the best sword to Your Majesty before he dies."

The boy offers up the unsheathed sword.

The hilt is engraved beautifully with plants, and there's not a speck of imperfection on the blade.

Rather than to use it in battle, that intricate sword body would be more useful as a decoration to show status.

I slowly raise my hands, reaching for the piece of art in Helio's hands.

“We gladly accept.”

“Your Majesty... Really?”

“Of course, really. Tell your father, thanks for giving me such an amazing thing.”

The boy finally relaxes, those grey eyes filled with unease now drowned in tears.

Just as the tips of my fingers are going to touch the cold metal—

“No!”

I’m just thinking, ‘Why is this voice so familiar?’, and before I can even turn around, a gust of wind blows past my waist. I want to reach out for the shoulder of the voice’s owner, but the child’s agile body brushes past my arm, crashing unhesitatingly into the boy standing before me.

“Ah!”

Helio flips backwards and falls to the ground, while the sword held loosely in his hand drops onto the stone ground, making a clear noise. Conrad very quickly picks it up.

“Greta?!”

The girl with her olive skin and red-brown wavy curls is standing between the boy and me, slender arms spread as wide as they can go.

The one who tripped over the blacksmith’s son, is Greta, who was so tired last night she should still be sleeping now.

“I’m not going to let you touch a hair on Yuuri’s head! I won’t let you touch him!”

The reddish-brown eyes are shining like a cat’s, trying to scare the opponent she considers her enemy.

Because of the agitation and nervousness, her shoulders are even shaking slightly.

She only has on a coat over her pajamas, and her hair is still over the place after waking up.

“Greta will never forgive anyone who tries to hurt Yuuri!”

“...Eh... Why would I dare do anything that would hurt His Majesty...”

As a result, Helio is the one shocked despite being older, falling onto his butt as all the blood drains out of his face.

The soldiers from the security squad grab his arms to help him up.

I put my hands on my brave daughter’s shoulders, comforting her,

“You misunderstood, Greta. This child only wanted to help the blacksmith give me a sword.”

“But he held the sword at you!”

“He wanted to give it to me.”

“I don’t care!”

Greta shakes her wavy curls, interrupting me. Her voice comes out like a scream.

“I don’t care, Yuuri! He could very well be lying. Or maybe he made that up so he could get closer to you!”

“How is that possible, he is just a kid, you know?”

“No way!”

It’s just a simple denial, but her voice is full of sorrow, and so small it’s barely audible.

But soon the tone becomes full of intense emotion again.

“Precisely because it’s a kid, it can’t be trusted.”

She roars agitatedly, her back colliding into me. So hot.

“You can’t say it’s not a bad guy just because it’s a kid.”

“Why...”

“Because Greta is a bad kid!”

She’s still standing with her arms wide open in front of me, trying to protect me.

"Greta tried to hurt Yuuri! I tried to—to assassinate you. Even though I'm a kid, even though I'm just a kid, but I've done some bad things too, I've done things that can never be forgiven, I committed a crime! That's why you can't trust them just because it's a kid! Since he's holding a weapon, then... then he... is not a good kid!"

The voice slowly becomes rougher, and vanishes. I think,
'Don't cry, please don't cry anymore. You don't have to try to make up for it so desperately, I don't want you to fight so desperately with the mistakes of your past.'

I squat down, forcing her to face me, and then I hug her tightly. There's the faint smell of greenery on her.

"There's no such thing, all children are good children! They don't know how to plan anything evil. Greta is a good kid, you were always a good kid. You're so lively, and brave, and gentle. You should know, you're my most precious daughter, that I love the most in the world."

"It's not like that. I-It's not... it's not..."

"Truth is, I know everything, only you might not have noticed. After all, that's not something you would notice on your own."

I happen to lower my head, and notice that the girl is barefooted. I'm just about to ask,

'Why aren't you wearing shoes?'

But the words get caught in my throat.

She was probably tripped on a stone on the way here, there's still blood on her large toenail.

"You ran from your room all the way here... barefooted?"

She doesn't mind bleeding, desperately holding out her arms to protect me.

"Thank you."

"Because..."

Her slender fingers grab my clothes tightly, tears flowing continuously from her

tightly-shut eyes.



"I wanted... to be of help to Yuuri."

I don't ask her why.

"Greta wants to help Yuuri. Because if I don't...."

Conrad puts his hand on the sobbing girl's shoulder, quietly soothing her,

“Calm down, breathe slowly, and then you’ll gradually stop crying.”

Crying until there’s snot all over his face, Günter hands a handkerchief to Greta, carefully convincing her to leave.

But I grab her shoulders tightly, dispelling Günter’s notion.

“It’s okay.”

The girl’s head is resting on my shoulder, her forehead rubbing on my clothes.

“It’s okay to leave her like this.”

“But Your Majesty...”

“I said it’s okay. Right, sorry for postponing the drill, and the person we were supposed to hide it from found out about it anyway. First, let me explain to you, Greta.”

I turn my attention to her immediately, and use the force in my arms to replace volume as I lecture.

“This has nothing to do with whether or not you can be of help, and besides, I never thought of anything like that. Do you think I would hate a child who can’t help me? Do I look like that sort of person?”

The girl suppresses a sob, looking up at me with wet eyes.

“...Am I that much of a jerk?”

“No, you’re not, that’s just what Greta thought, and Anissina said something like that too, but I just wanted to use actions to show what I thought!”

“You don’t have to think about adult things like being useful!”

“No, this has nothing to do with kids or adults! If you don’t use words or actions to show gratitude, you will eventually lose the love!”

Greta says non-stop, looking completely serious.

“I heard that a lot of married couples split up because of that!”

“Married couples?!”

What kind of an education has Anissina been giving her?

And the scene of everyone trying to hide their sobs, freezes immediately in

that moment. It's all the fault of the shocking truth, 'So at the end it was the Poison Lady's doing?'

As for Greta, she looks around her with an expression of admiration, "I just knew it, everyone straightens up at the mention of Anissina's name. Anissina really is amazing, looks like she's respected by everyone."

Everyone is desperately saying 'that's wrong, that's wrong' in the hearts. "Um..."

Having been completely forgotten, Helio asks in the position he was just now. Maybe he feels awkward disturbing the touching father-daughter moment before his eyes, because his voice is tiny and incoherent.

"Is Lady Anissina really capable?"

"She's very capable!"

"...Yes, capable—"

Greta answers immediately and innocently, but Conrad, Günter and I hesitate for a moment before replying. This shows the difference in our definition of the word.

"Then can Lady Anissina heal my father's disease? Um... Truth is we did ask for a doctor, but all of them just shook their heads sadly and said they didn't know what my father's disease was."

"Disease? Oh, yeah, you said you came here in your father's place, and no matter what you had to give me the sword while your father lives... While he lives?! Is he that seriously ill?"

I glance at the sword in Conrad's hands, and then at the boy's face. Helio is still unsteady on his feet, and there are streaks of white on his face, probably from where he cried until there were no more tears to cry.

"If you want to heal a sickness, it would probably be better to find Gisela instead of Anissina. Anyway, Helio, where do you stay? We'll bring the best army doctor over."

The solemn soldiers start whispering again. Someone mumbles, "And how did

it become the Sergeant this time?"

"Ah? What, she's only a sergeant? I thought Gisela had a higher rank than that?"

"No, her actual rank is a little higher than that."

Even though he's her adopted father, Günter is looking at his bottom right. For some reason, his gaze is floating all over the place.

Apparently the women just happened to be having tea together, so the Poison Lady and the Sergeant arrive side by side. The young soldier who first found out about this, reports the news with a face full of tension.

"They are actually together! Heavens~ How can this be, and they're walking together too."

His voice is almost off-key.

As the fiery-red hair approaches slowly, the atmosphere increases in tandem.

As usual, Lady von Christ Gisela can only be seen one step behind, her expression gentle.

"It's much safer if they're here together... Hey, wait a sec! Why is everyone so terrified?"

I just had to think about the torture Lord von Christ Gwendal had to endure every day, and it isn't hard to understand why they would be so scared of the Red Demon Poison Lady—Anissina.

But, why are they also so scared of the kind and compassionate pretty lady army doctor with the gentle hands, the healing NO. 1 mazoku Gisela?

What a mystery.

Or perhaps they have some combo attack when they're together?

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The blacksmith's son—Helio takes us to his house on the east of the street where you can see the city walls.

It's a townhouse with the first floor made into a factory, and the second floor living quarters.

Perhaps considering that the work done there might cause some noise, so his house is at a certain distance away from the surrounding houses.

Plus we had ridden a few horses here without any prior notice, so we would surely cause the neighbors some trouble, and I had started thinking of ways to greet them.

However, there aren't any faces poking out from behind windows curiously, or any people gathering from elsewhere to join in on the fun.

We're the only people here as far as the eyes can see, this entire place is just like a ghost town.

"If the people knew Your Majesty was here, it would surely cause a small panic. Although none of your subjects are here to welcome you, please condone that."

After we dismount, all of us including Greta are wrapped up in dusty capes.

"What? Forget a panic, there isn't a single citizen here! And we don't have to worry about a panic or anything, we won't be discovered if we just walk into the house!"

"The quietness is indeed strange."

Conrad is suspicious too, but Günter starts bragging.

"That proves the efficiency of the Pedestrian Hell measures, the loyalty of the citizens in the capital is really commendable. But that's also because Your Majesty is a good king, that's why all the people... Ah~ Wait! Wait for me, Your Majesty!"

Günter's expression changes drastically mid-speech.

"You're not planning to go to the scene of the disease, are you? That's the house of a patient, and he has a strange disease that even doctors can't heal! Your Majesty actually plans to enter such a place... Just imagining it, I... There must be blood all over the floor... and a charred odor!"

"What are you imagining weird things for?"

Right then Miss Anissina walks past us suavely, holding a cage with a small bird in her hands.

"Good morning, Your Majesty, how are you? I heard that the assassination drill rather failed due to a small, unexpected incident."

She probably didn't say 'failed spectacularly' out of her own little kindness. That high dark red ponytail is as proud as ever.

"Always saying how elite and excellent they are, but in the end it's just a security team made of useless men. Theoretically not even a mudskipper should have been able to get into the Pedestrian Hell, but as a result such a large child forces his way in front of His Majest without any obstruction whatsoever, a team like that can't be trusted at all. Who knew that Lord von Voltaire is only away temporarily, and the army immediately falls to shambles. Lord von Christ?"

The sky blue gaze stops above Günter.

"There's poop on your hair."

"Mmph!"

She really doesn't hold back with her words, a few of the soldiers pretend to cough and clear their throats.

"Ah, Miss Anissina! That cage is?"

There's a bright yellow bird tilting its beak in the elaborate silver cage . It's a canary with a very Brazilian color palette.

"This? This is the 'Magical Invention Odor Detector—Can Airy. It can determine whether there is poison in the air before we enter a building or cave."

"Waa~ So if inside is filled with poison, then this canary would have sacrificed itself for us? Although it can't be helped, poor thing."

"Poor thing? It won't die, and never was alive in the first place, because it's just a magical invention."

"Eh, but isn't that canary..."

"I said it's a magical invention!"

From its short chirps and tilted head, it looks just like a real bird no matter how you cut it.

But not long after I protest, Miss Anissina just opens the door to the factory

wide, and holds the cage high towards that direction.

And then the bird chirps hysterically.

“Can can can, can airy--!”

“That’s no surprise. Even I can smell the pungent odor here.”

Helio scratches his head abashedly,

“Sorry, because I was too busy, I forgot to throw away the leftovers.”

This really is a blacksmith’s house that no one had the time to clean.

“What a bother. Even though we’ve already deduced one of the reasons behind the odor, since the Magical Invention Odor Detector has reacted, we can’t go in without any preparations. Now we can only ask Lady von Christ’s father to provide the maryoku, quickly put on the Magical Invention Protection Vest...”

Right then, Gisela suddenly appears in our field of vision.

She crosses her arms in front of her chest, summoning the soldiers to her with one pointer finger.

Her eyes are narrowed in displeasure, and the corners of her mouth are pulled downwards.

T-this is the first time I’ve seen Gisela like this.

All of the soldiers act like rabbits in front of a tiger, shivering as they gather nervously.

“L-Lady Gisela!”

“You...”

She abruptly takes a deep breath.

“Get your asses ready!”

“Eek—”

And then, she goes down the row of soldiers, giving them each a slap... No, giving them each moral support.

“Those people over there don’t have any real combat experience, they’re just

the round table team who sit in the safety of their commanding seats and comfortably give orders, you know?! If you let them get ahead of you, then as soldiers aren't you a disgrace?! Are you going to abandon even that bit of spine you got as big as your tip of your pinky?!"

"We're very sorry, Sergeant!"

"If you have even a bit of a soldier's spirit left, get in there now and rescue the patient! You bunch of tortoises!"

"Yes! Understood, Sergeant! We'll go in now!"

In that moment my entire upper body went cold.

It's a demon, she really is a Demon Sergeant! And she seems to have an intense enmity towards Anissina.

The image of these two sipping tea at a table together, is really hard to imagine.

After hearing the Sergeant's king-like orders, the soldiers ignore my look of surprise and immediately rush into the blacksmith's house, as panicked as hamsters.

They don't have any poison detectors, or any protection clothes, but within ten seconds they have the leader of the family carted out on his bed.

"Successfully rescued, Sergeant!"

"He's still breathing, Sergeant!"

"The rotting stench of leftovers is really very strong, Sergeant..."

"Mn! 'I finally see the Shin Makoku soldier spirit'... Did you think I would say that?!"

Although even we thought that they deserved at least some praise, Sergeant Gisela believes in radicalism.

"You bastards, how could you bring a serious patient with what seems like an open contagious disease next to His Majesty?! Even level one soldiers wouldn't do something so stupid! All of you, shave your heads bald and go back to the academy!"

“W-we’re really sorry...”

The cream of the crop, scary-looking Shin Makoku national security team that Gunter was talking about now have tears in their eyes.

On the other hand, perhaps Gisela let off all her steam, because her attitude suddenly changes 180 degrees.

No, instead of saying it changed, it’d be better to say she changed back into a normal person.

“Your Majesty, I’m so sorry, we let you see such an ugly sight.”

“N-nah. It’s okay!”

And then I suddenly notice Greta’s moist eyes.

“Greta, were you scared?”

“...Gisela... is so cool...”

Oh, crap!

“Papa, Papa!”

Gisela puts all her energy into pulling the boy hugging his father tightly and the bed away, distancing me from the patient.

Disregarding the risk to her own health, she stays determinedly at the post of a healer, squatting down by the patient’s side.

Right now, all I can see is her bloodless arm, and the man’s thin arm held in her fingers.

Just then, green leaf-shaped spots start appearing all over his skin, the shade of dirt.

“T-this is?”

“What’s the matter—Gisela—”

“This is the mysterious illness that spreads every 645 years—the mugwort fever!”

“W-what did you say--!”

Why does the time period sound so similar to the Taika Reforms [8]? But seeing

as Günter and Gisela both look shocked, I can tell that this is a very serious disease.

"No wonder even the doctors are helpless. Because there's no one who ever really healed the mugwort fever anywhere in the country."

"Then, has the treatment for this fever been discovered? Since it's an epidemic from 645 years ago, then the reason behind it should have been discovered long ago, and a complete treatment was found, right?"

"About that..."

Be it her voice or her tone, Gisela has reverted to being a medical officer, and her expression is regretful as she mumbles.

"As it is only a temporary epidemic, and it only spreads for a very short period of time, disappearing before the pathogen can leave any sort of trace, so forget a proper treatment method, we still don't even know what the cause of the disease is."

"Eh, so we don't even know the source?!"

"Yes, and if it really is mugwort fever, then surely all the other adults around here have been infected..."

"It's bad, Your Excellency!"

A few soldiers, who I think are Lord Weller's men, aren't affected by the Sergeant, and are now running over from a house nearby. They had been sent to investigate the area at some point in time.

"What's the matter?"

"No wonder none of the citizens here reacted to the commotion we caused, it's because all the people here are sick and bedridden. And forget the normal people here, even the doctor on duty has collapsed onto the couch in the living room. According to our observations, there are five of them in critical condition, and eight just showing the initial symptoms, the situation right now is really hard to determine."

"And the children?"

"About that, the miraculous thing is that the children don't seem to be

affected at all, they're just standing at the side helplessly, worried and scared. Anyway, we already brought them out just now."

Conrad nods, and uses a smoke signal to contact the rest of the medical team.

"Looks like we can't make rash moves now, it'd be bad if we got infected too."

So calm, I just hope he won't suddenly transform his attitude like Gisela did.

"Only the children weren't infected, that does sound like the symptoms of mugwort fever."

"I see, mugwort fever..."

Listening to Gisela's painful report, Anissina looks like she wants to touch her nose.

"What's with the disdainful look!"

"Because that isn't poison~"

Maybe diseases can't pique her curiosity. Like an old uncle, Anissina touches the tip of her nose with her thumb, mumbling,

"But a period of 645 years... 645... 645... The number just seems so familiar~"

I really want to tell her 'it's the Taika Reforms, the Taika Reforms', but I resist. Because if I break her concentration now, I might actually be caught and used in her experiments.

"This feeling of not remembering is agonizing. No, this just makes me want to remember even more... Ah!"

Her face suddenly glowing, Lady von Karbelnikoff claps her hands together lightly, and then says the ominous name I heard just yesterday afternoon.

"It's the buzzing cicadas!"

Hearing her conclusion, I instinctively defend myself.

"Eh~ I-it wasn't me, I wasn't the one who brought those cicadas—"

"Those cicadas? What does that mean? Nah, it's just that the documents really did state that the exact time the buzzing cicadas cross the ocean to Shin Makoku is once every 645 years. If you count backwards from today, it has been

645 years since the last time, and 645 years between that and the last last time.”

Gisela, who was staring at the patient, raises her head, right now she’s in healer mode.

“The last widespread epidemic of mugwort fever was also 645 years ago, and 645 years before that, there was a disease very much like ragweed fever that caused panic among the people. Back then no cure could be found at all either, and in a very short time it vanished. It’s too bad none of the record were kept from then.”

As for me, I voice a very common opinion as a citizen of the medically advanced Japan. If the times the cicadas fly over and the disease spreads are so much in sync, then...

“We can only guess that the cicadas brought the germs from across the sea...”

“Then won’t the cicadas be useful in the treatment?!”

What--?! That conclusion is a bit too farfetched, isn’t it? Mazoku thought processes are really hard to understand.

“That must be right, Lady von Karbelnikoff! Heavens~ How come I never noticed it? Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! I’m so stupid! Gisela, what the hell do you have in your skull?! Mud? Sawdust? Or rotting cow dung?”

She uses the Demon Sergeant’s tone even when scolding herself.

“If the rumors are true, then the buzzing cicadas should migrate across the sea soon, so we just have to wait for their arrival, and then look for a treatment method together with them.”

The giant cicadas have become an important key in increasing medical technology, huh... Why do I have such an empty helpless feeling?

As for Greta, looking at the two grown women’s expression of excitement, she raises the head that was lying on my lap, and my hands are still on her shoulders too.

“Señor and the others are already here, y’know!”

“What did you say?”

"I said—the cicadas came with Greta to the castle yesterday."

Anissina immediately shuts her mouth.

Her brows fly skywards suddenly, her sky blue eyes filled with practicality going round as saucers.

"No way? That extremely rare insect the buzzing cicadas are here?! You said the buzzing cicadas have flown here?! Greta, why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"Because most women hate bugs, I thought Anissina would too!"

With one powerful toss of that hair tied high, three unfortunate soldiers on the scene get broken noses.

"The only thing that gives me a headache in the world is roosters! Heavens—What to do? I can't believe I'm actually lucky enough to see one of the world's seven rare insects, the buzzing cicadas! No wonder the saying goes, 'the older you live, the more you see'!"

"T-those cicadas are that popular?"

As expected, the knowledgeable Poison Lady has an unbeatable upper hand.

"It's exactly as you said, Your Majesty, they are after all giant cicadas that come only once every 645 years! Not only are they known as Shinou's royal servants, to some scholars, they are the kings of the insect world!"

"Eh—"

"Also, pulp fiction like 'Terrifying Buzzing Stories' and 'The Transformation' with shocking contents such as 'can the hero who one morning wakes up as a giant cicada return to normal', these all use the buzzing cicadas as their creative inspiration!"

"Eh, eeeh—"

"Speaking of which, there's going to a wall built on the borders of our country and neighboring countries."

"Eh, eeeh—eeeeeh—"

"Your Majesty, you're becoming an answering machine!"

After Conrad taps my shoulder, I finally regain my rational mind. No, I can't, I

was being led right by the nose by Miss Anissina.

“Is that so? We just have to borrow the buzzing cicadas power, and we can save this child’s father and everyone around here?”

“Although we can’t make that conclusion yet, but if we hypothesize according to the documents, the possibility of treating them is fairly high.”

The girl’s warm body moves away from my knees, red brown eyes sparkling in excitement.

“Then, let me call them. Can I? Greta’s going to call them, okay?”

And then Greta raises her little fist, yelling into the sky,

“¡¿Cómo está, Señor?! ¡¿Cómo está, Señorita?!” [\[9\]](#)

Greta, where exactly were you born?

Soon, the ominous sound of wings and the chirping that makes you want to stuff your ears comes from the distance.

“Chiuui—n!”

“Chuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuii-n!”

It’s the dentist, it’s the sound of the dentist’s teeth grinder.

“Chiu—Chiuchiuchi, chiuuii—n!”

The hot summer babe is here! No, wait, it’s a group of hot summer babes! And that volume isn’t from just one or two cicadas’ sound waves, it’s obviously the sound of a swarm. In no time at all, the sky has been dyed a disgusting brown, they’re here in their swarms.

“Señor, Señorita!”

Hearing Greta’s calls, the two in front of the team immediately land, looks like those two are the leaders of this team, huh. Conrad says this unintentionally, I’m afraid it’s probably his honest thoughts.

“For some reason, she is particularly good with leaders of rare creatures.”

“It’d be even better if they could understand human language.”

Even if they’re good insects, but when faced with my own adorable daughter

hugging universe SIZE giant insects, I can still barely watch. And honestly, it's really bad on the eyes.

"Señor, Señorita, I have something to ask of you. Please, can you help Anissina and Gisela heal these people's illness?"

"Chiuu--n!"

The two cicadas reply with something, whether affirmative or refusal no one knows, and then they emit sound waves to their companions in the sky. Since I don't have a good impression of dentists, I can only squat down, crying, while the synchronized cicada team descend in order, performing some special show like 'The Wonders of Nature'.

When Señor looks at Gisela with his sparkling composite eyes, he notices the seriously ill patient, and makes a rather cute sound.

"Chuui?"

"Ah, Señor!"

Before Greta can stop it, the huge insect has moved across the ground with a speed far surpassing cicadas, reaching the blacksmith who had been carried together with his bed. And just as everyone expected, it sticks the tube hidden in its mouth into the man's neck.

"Señor, stop! He's already on the verge of death, how can you still suck his blood!"

But it doesn't listen to my orders at all.

The Demon Sergeant Gisela immediately makes a demonic 'tsk' sound, her hand reaching for the short sword on her waist.

"Spare the cicada, Gisela!"

The one who stops her, is actually her adopted father Günter. And he's using a tone that suits his beauty too, how rare.

"Please observe the patient carefully, color has returned to his face without us noticing. Although his blood is being sucked, but there's more color on his cheeks and forehead."

"It's true, what on earth is..."

The previously motionless hand starts shaking slightly, his chest, having returned to its normal temperature, is now rising and falling rhythmically. Even if his breathing has become regular, these are obvious signs of recovery.

"Papa!"

Helio, who was pulled to a side, now breaks away from the soldiers and rushes over, gripping his blacksmith father's hand tightly, even bursting into tears.

I'm a bit lost.

"Wait a sec, wasn't his blood sucked? Shouldn't he be even more lifeless?"

"The only one who can solve this mystery, seems to be me, as someone with personal experience."

"Oh yeah, you too..."

The first victim of the blood-sucking, the spirited Lord von Christ crosses his arm in front of his chest and stands up. Although he didn't save the day this time, he still looks rather pleased with himself.

"It looks like the legendary rare insects, the buzzing cicadas, much prefer unhealthy blood that has been polluted, and to make the needle they stick inside easier to pull out, they will also insert an anti-coagulant. That liquid is in fact a very effective medicine, for example in the entire last night, the aches in my shoulders and waist never acted up, my face didn't swell either, and even that Athlete's foot that itched like crazy is completely healed."

"...So you had problems like that!"

"And even my beauty meter has increased by 20%, allowing me to head straight down the road towards His Majesty's affections."

The fact that his completely baseless confidence can get this exaggerated, is actually a pretty terrifying thing.

"So, Your Excellency—"

As I thought, like adopted father, like adopted daughter.

"If the rare insects can suck unhealthy blood, does that mean they're the only

treatment method for mugwort fever?"

Hey hey hey.

"Not only that!"

Miss Anissina, who was examining the behavior of the rare insects carefully, raises her head forcefully as she takes notes. Her voice is so powerful it causes the soldiers behind to fall, one by one—they were surely knocked down by her head with a lot of strength.

"The migration of the buzzing cicadas across the sea isn't completely meaningless, we can assume that the reason they fly over here in swarms, is to search for blood contaminated with mugwort fever."

Hey hey hey, that theory is way farfetched, isn't it.

"That makes sense... and this way we can explain why they always show up on land during the same time period... if blood infected with mugwort fever is this rare insect's favorite..."

"Wait a sec, wait a sec, aren't you guys being too optimistic here?!" I look around me to find someone more unbiased about this. Hopefully someone will understand that this may just be a coincidence.

"If the hypothesis is true..."

"Conrad, why do you think so too?"

Lord Weller touches the bottom of his ear with a finger, thinking before he says,

"This would place the credit on Greta, who had led the rare insects, who were probably lost at sea, to Shin Makoku. If Señor was just a little later in arriving, the diseases would likely spread instantly."

The cause of all this who had unwittingly contributed hugely to the country forcefully throws her cape to a side, and then brushes past my arm to run towards the patient and the healer (cicada).

"You can't suck too much, Señor, or it might affect his health!"

Señor, whose shoulder-like part is being held by the insect tamer, obediently

lifts its chin. And then its extremely sphere-like composite eyes become moist, as though it hasn't had its fill.

"Chuiinnn!"

Meaning 'I'm full'.

Helio's father miraculously regains his consciousness, touching his sobbing son's head.

"That's wonderful, you over there, listen up!"

The healer immediately makes the right decision.

"Patrol this area now, and bring all the infected patients here! Let them undergo Master Señor's treatment!"

"Understood, Sergeant!"

"Too soft! Or has it been too long since you were trained?!"

"Under~stood! Sergeant!"

The soldiers move even more cleanly than they did during the assassination drill earlier, carrying out the Sergeant's orders, even singing songs like, 'The Sergeant's Mood is Great Today'.

"I-is this all right? Using such a strange treatment method without any proof."

"This counts as emergency measures, Your Majesty."

I look to my side, where Miss Anissina's sky blue eyes are sparkling with ill-hidden curiosity, and she's smiling a very arroga... No, I mean, a very beautiful smile.

"I will immediately start research on the blood-sucking habits of rare insects and the effect of the liquid upon entering the human body. After there's only a thin line between medicine and poison, and there's no better research topic than this. Thank goodness..."

"Eek!"

The gaze like an invader eyeing its prey, has scared Günter into straightening his expression.

"There's a suitable experimental table... and test subjects, then please leave the rest to me. Your Majesty need not worry about such trivial matters, but firstly you should praise Greta for her contribution. An outstanding Poison Lady should be praised, and idolized, to create even more outstanding Poison Ladies."

"Poison Lady?!"

"Ah~ No, I meant child, of course I meant little girls."

Maybe because she heard someone mention her name, the girl with the red-brown hair looks over our way, even mouthing 'what's the matter?' with her lips.

"Are you calling me?"

"We were just saying what a good kid you are."

I put both hands by my mouth to replace a loudspeaker, and then yell slightly upwards, hoping that everyone in the entire city, in the entire country, can hear me.

"We're saying Greta is a good kid!"

"Really? Was Greta of help to Yuuri?"

Not only did you help me, you probably saved everyone in Shin Makoku, you know.

The young cicada tamer stands between the two women she respects, working spiritedly.

I heard that childhood experience will decide a person's future, so chances are high that this child will grow up into a nurse or a mad magician... Greta, to be honest Papa would rather you become an angel in white.

I stand in the distance and admire my daughter's heroic stance, upon seeing the patients heal one by one after the cicadas suck their blood, maybe out of relief, drowsiness suddenly sweeps over me.

The banquet last night and the unfamiliar assassination drill early in the morning, has caused a lack of sleep in me.

"Your Majesty."

"A-ya~ Fint ah thell you nough to call me Your Majesty (Didn't I tell you not to

call me Your Majesty), Godfather.”

I’m already yawning non-stop.

“Sorry, I just can’t get rid of that habit. On the other hand, Your Majesty, if you’re tired, you can just hand everything here to Gisela, how about you return to your chambers first for a rest?”

“As the person in charge, how can I...”

“Even leaders should have the heart to trust their subordinates.”

And so, half-refusing half-accepting, I return to the castle, and enter the room that was cleaned up long ago. Wolfram, who had originally planned to sleep until noon, has probably recharged enough, and left without even informing where he was going.

Conrad picks up the silver pillow from the made bed, and then stuffs the pink pillow into my chest with a ‘Please Enjoy’ gesture.

“I promised you.”

“Yahoo--! Being lucky enough to have naughty dreams in broad daylight, makes me feel like I’m doing something bad though.”

“What does it matter? Just take it as a small reward after a hard day’s work.”

“Is that so, that sounds all right.”

Thank goodness Wolfram, who tends to hug me, isn’t here now, so even if I say anything weird in my sleep, I don’t have to worry about being interrogated by, ‘Who was that? Was it a man?!’

“Right, let’s sleep, let’s sleep...”

Just as I take off my shirt, pull up the covers, and get ready to shrink into the mattress—

“Yuuri!”

The girl rushes in without knocking, crosses the living area and bedroom in amazing speed, and in no time at all she jumps onto my stomach.

“G-Greta?”

She's all smiles, too.

"Anissina and Gisela have learned how to control Señor and the others, so they said I can go play elsewhere, and then, and then!"

Greta even bounces on the bed a few times as she says,

"Greta said she wants to play with Yuuri, and then Günter said, 'His Majesty is getting ready to rest, if you want to sleep too you can sleep together.' So he said that because I worked really hard to lead Señor and the others, my reward is that I can sleep together with you, Yuuri!"

Greta hugs my nodding neck tightly.

"I'm so happy--! It's been so long since I slept with Papa!"

"That's right, you were studying overseas all the time before, so only for today, I'll give you special treatment!"

Lord Weller, who was on his way out of the room, walks over with a smile as though he saw a puppy, and picks up the pink pillow.

"Confiscated!"

I raise my hands up high next to my face, I don't dare object now.

"Oh, yeah, Yuuri, tell me some stories before I sleep. I really want to hear the sequel to 'Yokohama Jennifer's Harbor Ultimate Punch'~"

She lies on the bed, supported by her arms, her slender legs swinging here and there like a dolphin.

"You like to hear fighting stories like that! Really, you really are a kid!"

"Eh~ I'm not a kid! My favorite is Poison Lady, and then only Jennifer!"

Just when I mumble to myself, 'Life with a daughter really is great', a groggy Greta just happens to turn her head around to face me. But her eyelids have already fluttered to a close, covering her red-brown eyes.

"...No, life with a father is great!"

I reach my hand out to the head that's leaning on my shoulder, and see that there's a little swirl right in the middle of her curly hair.

It's okay for you to keep being a kid.

Please always be a kid.

Until that day when I become a father worth being proud of.

References

1. ↑ Suiton no jutsu lit. Water-style technique, Naruto fans would know :3
2. ↑ Nyanmage, a samurai cat, is the mascot of the Edo Wonderland Nikko Edomura, a ninja theme park in Nikko reenacting the Edo Period. There are monkey performances there too, hence Yuuri's confusion.
3. ↑ [3.0 3.1](#) The titular character from the manga, 'Golgo 13', a professional assassin for hire. He also has really thick eyebrows :3
4. ↑ I can only assume the actual pun came from the famous 'hennachoko', but it was already lost in Chinese orz
5. ↑ In Ginza, Akihabara and Shinjuku, certain roads are closed off to traffic on holidays, creating something called 'Pedestrian Heaven'.
6. ↑ Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev[a] (April 15 [O.S. April 3] 1894 – September 11, 1971) was a Russian politician who led the Soviet Union during part of the Cold War. (From Wikipedia)
7. ↑ Birdman Rally is a competition where members of the public build home-made gliders, hang gliders and human-powered aircraft, ranging from very serious aircraft to mere costumes, leap off a river-or seaside jetty, and compete for distance and entertainment value. (Wikipedia)
8. ↑ The Taika Reforms were a set of doctrines established by Emperor Kotoku in the year 645. (Wikipedia)
9. ↑ Spanish for 'how are you'.